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The Lord's
table; or,
Meditations on
the holy
communion ...



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THE LORD'S TABLE

THE LORD'S TABLE

OR

Meditations

*ON THE HOLY COMMUNION OFFICE
IN THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER*

BY THE REV.

E. H. BICKERSTETH, M.A.

VICAR OF CHRIST CHURCH, HAMPSTEAD, AND RURAL DEAN



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THE ORDER FOR THE
ADMINISTRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER,
OR
HOLY COMMUNION.

- ¶ So many as intend to be partakers of the holy Communion shall signify their names to the Curate, at least some time the day before.
- ¶ And if any of those be an open and notorious evil liver, or have done any wrong to his neighbours by word or deed, so that the Congregation be thereby offended ; the Curate, having knowledge thereof, shall call him and advertise him, that in any wise he presume not to come to the Lord's Table, until he hath openly declared himself to have truly repented and amended his former naughty life, that the Congregation may thereby be satisfied, which before were offended ; and that he hath recompensed the parties, to whom he hath done wrong ; or at least declare himself to be in full purpose so to do, as soon as he conveniently may.
- ¶ The same order shall the Curate use with those betwixt whom he perceiveth malice and hatred to reign ; not suffering them to be partakers of the Lord's Table, until he know them to be reconciled. And if one of the parties so at variance be content to forgive from the bottom of his heart all that the other hath trespassed against him, and to make amends for that he himself hath offended ; and the other party will not be persuaded to a godly unity, but remain still in his frowardness and malice : the Minister in that case ought to admit the penitent

A

person to the holy Communion, and not him that is obstinate. Provided that every Minister so repelling any, as is specified in this, or the next precedent Paragraph of this Rubrick, shall be obliged to give an account of the same to the Ordinary within fourteen days after at the farthest. And the Ordinary shall proceed against the offending person according to the Canon.

¶ The Table, at the Communion-time having a fair white linen cloth upon it, shall stand in the Body of the Church, or in the Chancel, where Morning and Evening Prayer are appointed to be said. And the Priest standing at the North side of the Table shall say the Lord's Prayer, with the Collect following, the people kneeling.

INTRODUCTION.

How solemn was that night, when the Angel of the Lord passed through the land of Egypt and smote all the firstborn, from the firstborn of Pharaoh on his throne to the firstborn of the captive in the dungeon. The children of Israel were sheltered by the blood of the lamb, which at God's command they had sprinkled on the lintel and side-posts of their houses ; for the Lord had said, When I see the blood, I will pass over you. But wherever the blood was not, there was a great cry of agony, for there was not a house among the Egyptians where there was not one dead.

That night was a crisis in Israel's history. Henceforth the vast hordes of Hebrew bond-servants, who had toiled for long years under the lash of cruel taskmasters, became a nation of freemen. The hour of their deliverance had come. They went forth out of Egypt loaded with the gifts of their enemies, under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, and following the mysterious guidance of the pillar of fire and cloud. The events of that night must have been so deeply graven on the hearts of those who had heard the

bitter wailing of their smitten foes, and had themselves been so marvellously saved from death and rescued from thraldom, that nothing, we should have said, no lapse of time, no change of scene, could ever erase the remembrance from their minds or the minds of their children.

But He, who knew what was in man, appointed that the Passover feast, of which they partook in haste that night, their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, should be perpetuated as a solemn anniversary from year to year, and from generation to generation. He commanded, saying, This day shall be unto you for a memorial ; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. And Moses, we read, called for all the elders of Israel, and said unto them, When ye be come to the land which the Lord will give you, according as He hath promised, it shall come to pass that ye shall keep this service ; and when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service ? that ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's pass-over, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.^a

Fifteen hundred years had passed away, with all their manifold changes to the struggling Church and the fallen world, but this memorial feast was still observed by the people of God. The ministry of

^a Exod. xii. 14, 25-27.

the Son of God, incarnate among men, was almost ended. He, who spake as man never spake, had uttered His last words in the temple to those who refused Him. He had done among them works such as no other man did. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. And now it only remained for Him to suffer and to die for the world He came to save. The Good Shepherd must lay down His life for the sheep. And so we read in the simple Gospel narrative :—

“ Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. And they said unto Him, Where wilt Thou that we prepare? And He said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest-chamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.

“ And they went, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

“ And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this

passover with you before I suffer : for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves : for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you : this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant^a in My blood, which is shed for you."^b

As we read these words, who does not feel how truly human as well as Divine is the love of Jesus? He was about to leave a world which had refused Him, and to ascend to the songs of angels and the adoration of the saints in glory. But His own words here assure us, that amid all those heavenly felicities He would not be content without our thoughtful, grateful, trustful remembrance. And the Master knew what we are and where we are.

He knew how hard we find it to apprehend heavenly things, and so He appointed these outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual realities. And the meaning of these emblems of bread and wine, and of these acts of eating the bread and drinking the wine, is so clear, that all who have come to

^a Thus rightly rendered in the Revised Version.

^b Luke xxii. 7-20.

years of discretion may understand it. The broken bread points out the bruised body of Jesus, who was wounded for our transgressions. The poured-out wine tells of His precious life-blood, which was shed for the sin of the world. The offer of the bread and the wine to us signifies how Jesus offers Himself to all who will accept Him as their Saviour and their Lord. The taking and partaking of them is a lively token that we do accept Him, who is Eternal Life, and close with His offer of salvation, so that our souls are strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are strengthened by the bread and wine. We do put forth the hand and take the bread and the cup. We do eat the bread and drink the wine. These are facts. So is it likewise a fact that by the grace of the Holy Spirit working invisibly in our hearts we by faith receive Jesus Christ, and feed upon the Bread of Life, and are washed in His most precious blood.

And then our Master knew how easily, unless we give the most earnest heed to the things we have heard, and unless we keep our heart with all diligence, we backslide from a diligent walk with God to carelessness and worldliness. And so He ordained this holy Supper of His love, and invited His children to draw nigh, as welcome guests, around their Father's board; but yet He warns them by His apostle not to come negligently and ignorantly, and charges them, Let a man examine

himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.^a None but those who reverently obey this His command can duly estimate its priceless value. It is a personal invitation from the Lord Jesus, as often as we minded to come to the holy Communion of His body and blood, to come first apart with Him, and speak with Him about our souls and our walk with God and our work for God.

Furthermore, our Master knew how often in the toil and struggle of life, amid its apparently conflicting interests and claims, the bonds of Christian brotherhood are strained, or even sometimes ruptured, for a while. And so in His great compassion as our Elder Brother in the family of God He instituted that feast, of which His apostle says, The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread (or loaf) which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body : for we are all partakers of that one bread.^b Whatever may tend to separate us from our brethren in Christ, here is a bond of union which is stronger than all. They and we have one Saviour, one Lord ; we all wash in the one fountain of His most precious blood ; we all feed upon His love ; we all live in the light of His countenance ; we all look forward to His presence. And even as our bodies are nurtured by the one

^a 1 Cor. xi. 28.

^b 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

loaf of which we eat, and by the one cup of which we drink, so do we and all our brothers and sisters in the household of faith live upon and in one Redeemer and Lord.

And, lastly, the Master knew how prone we are to forget the promise of His return. The daily, hourly pressure of things seen and temporal very easily draws off the mind from things unseen and eternal. It is difficult not to catch the spirit and tone of the slothful servant who said in his heart, "My Lord delayeth His coming." And therefore in ordaining this memorial feast of His dying love the Lord directed our eyes to a heavenlier banquet in the kingdom of God, and St. Paul reminds us that as often as we eat this bread and drink this wine we show forth the Lord's death till He come.

"*This do in remembrance of Me.*"—LUKE xxii. 19.

O Master of the human heart,
Emmanuel, one with us Thou art ;
But never closer to our breast
Than in Thy tender last behest :
"Child of My love, hear thou My plea,
Do this in memory of Me."

Dark is the veil that hangs between
Our mortal eye and things unseen ;
But in these pledges of Thy grace
By faith we see Thee face to face,
And hear Thy accents in the plea,
" Do this in memory of Me."

THE LORD'S TABLE.

The golden links which brethren bind
Are strained too soon, too oft untwined ;
But in this feast Thy children meet
Around one Father's mercy-seat,
All hearts responsive to one plea,
“ Do this in memory of Me.”

O blessed banquet of delight !
O daybreak of the pilgrim's night !
The banner over us is love,
While steals in music from above
The Bridegroom's strong persistent plea,
“ Do this in memory of Me.”

E. H. B.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

OUR Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation ; But deliver us from evil. Amen.

THERE is something most suitable, most helpful in beginning our holy Communion service with the prayer which Christ Himself has taught us. For we are children about to come into our Father's more immediate Presence, and gather around our Father's board. And these are the words put into our lips by Christ Himself with which to draw nigh to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God.

But in using these sacred petitions we have especial need to pray that the words may be to us spirit and life. For there is no small danger of words, we continually use, becoming so familiar that they fail to make any clear impress on our minds. A deep thinker has said of general truths and maxims : "Extremes meet. Truths, of all others the most awful and interesting, are too often considered as so true that they lose all the

become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. Is this the confidence, this the cry of our hearts?

Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven.—This embraces God's claim on every heart, every home, every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation. The will of God must needs demand perfect love, perfect obedience. It is quick as every thought, it weighs every word, it measures every action. And when it is fulfilled earth will reflect the purity and felicity of heaven. Do we honestly and ardently long for this?

Give us this day our daily bread.—This includes the supply of all temporal necessities. It warrants our making known every earthly need to God. It assures us the Lord will provide. Do we confidently commit the cares and wants of our mortal life to Him in whose hand we have placed our immortal souls?

And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us.—Children of such a Father, throned above the heavens, so worthy of all adoration, whose kingdom is everlasting, whose will is the supreme law of love, whose bounty sustains us, we love Him for all He is to us, all He has done for us. But we have times without number forgotten and grieved Him. We mourn before Him. But the blood-sprinkled way is open; and if we who are evil can, as taught by His loving Spirit, forgive our brethren their trespasses

against us, will not He forgive us, and lift up His countenance upon us, and grant us His peace, who gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins? Do we know the blessedness of those whose iniquity is forgiven and whose sin is covered?

And lead us not into temptation.—The pardoned sinner shrinks from contact with sin. He, who has washed his robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb dreads the mire of this world. If indeed his Father sees it needful for the trial of his faith to cause him to walk through divers temptations,^a he will surely trust Him who has promised that He will with the temptation make also a way of escape,^b and will rejoice that where the tribulation abounds His grace yet more abounds. But knowing His own exceeding frailty, the prayer of His life will be to be hidden in the hollow of His Father's hand. Is ours this sensitive shrinking from the defilements of sin?

But deliver us from evil.—This is unfolded in the collect for the Second Sunday in Lent, where we pray, “ Almighty God, who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves, keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Is it too much to say that he who prays this prayer from the heart shall prove,

^a James i. 2.

^b 1 Cor. x. 13.

The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day ? Is it our prayer ? Is our Amen real to every petition ?

But it may be that these thoughts on the Communion service of our Church may fall into the hands of those who are deeply conscious to themselves that all is not right with them. They are not at peace with God. There is a cloud of unconfessed and unforgiven sin betwixt their souls and their Father in heaven. And yet the Lord's Prayer, which they first learned to pray when kneeling by their mother's side, strikes a chord of holy memory in their hearts, and awakens a longing to partake of the children's bread. If it be so, let them cherish that desire as the very movement of the Spirit of God over their spirit. Let them listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, who has come to seek and to save them. Let them return like the prodigal to their Father's feet. They will not be cast out. There is a place for them in His heart, a place in His family, a place at His table.

"When I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love."—EZEK. xvi. 8.

My God, my Father, dost Thou call
 Thy long-lost wandering child to Thee ?
 And canst Thou, wilt Thou pardon all ?
 I come ; I come ; Lord, save Thou me.

O Jesus, art Thou passing by
 With all Thy goodness, grace, and power ?

And dost Thou hear my broken cry?
I come, I come, in mercy's hour.

O Holy Spirit, is it Thou,
My tenderest Friend, refused too long?
And art Thou pleading, striving now?
I come, I come : make weakness strong.

Yes, Lord, I come : Thy heart of love
Is moving, kindling, drawing mine.
I cast me at Thy feet to prove
The bliss, the heaven of being Thine.

E. H. B.

THE COLLECT.

ALMIGHTY God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid ; Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy holy Name ; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

THE Lord's Prayer is followed by the most beautiful collect for purity of heart. In this collect there is first the deep conviction expressed that all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do : we then earnestly pray for the cleansing of the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit ; and, this being granted, we humbly grasp by faith the blessed issue of love and praise.

If we would come with a truly penitent and contrite heart to the holy feast of the Lord's Supper, we must see ourselves in the light of God's Presence. Is it not a frequent lament with us that our sense of sin is so feeble and faint ? Ah ! would we know what sin is, we must draw nigh to God. When Abraham "stood yet before the Lord," he said, Behold, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.^a When the

^a Gen. xviii. 27.

Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, the penitent patriarch confessed, Behold I am vile : what shall I answer Thee ? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.^a When Isaiah saw the Lord upon His throne, and heard the voices of the veiled Seraphim, he said, Woe is me ! for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips.^b When St. Peter, awestruck by the miraculous draught of fishes, was deeply conscious of the Presence of Emmanuel, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me ; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.^c When St. Paul recalled to mind the vision which arrested him on his way to Damascus, and the grace which committed the Gospel to his trust, he calls himself the least of the apostles, yea, less than the least of all saints, yea, the chief of sinners.^d And when the disciple whom Jesus loved saw his Lord in Patmos, he fell at His feet as dead.^e Whenever we are tempted to think lightly of our sins, let us patiently consider how these holy men of God regarded themselves, and quietly and slowly repeat to ourselves the first few words of this collect, " Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid." Should we not shrink from even our closest earthly friend knowing all the selfish, worldly, distrustful thoughts of our bosom ? Yet all are known to God. There is no

^a Job xl. 4. ^b Isa. vi. 5. ^c Luke v. 8.

^d 1 Cor. xv. 9; Eph. iii. 8; 1 Tim. i. 15. ^e Rev. i. 17.

veil betwixt our soul and Him. The one who begins his meditation before God, saying with the Psalmist, "O Lord, Thou hast searched me, and known me," will never rest until at last he pleads with Him, "Search me, O God, and know my heart ; try me, and know my thoughts ; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."^a

Under the deep conviction of the searching Eye of God we pray, Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration (the inbreathing) of Thy Holy Spirit. We so truly feel that nothing is hid from God ; He knows all our weaknesses and waywardnesses, our failures and falls, all our broken resolves in the past and all the pressing claims and duties that lie before us ; we can only throw ourselves on the aid of His Omnipotent Spirit. So far as in us lies, we would open our hearts to all the sacred influences of the Holy Ghost. But God Himself must breathe that Spirit into our inmost being. He, the Spirit, can shed light upon all that is dark within us. He can sprinkle our anxious conscience with the atoning blood of Christ. He can whisper a peace which passes understanding. He can take away the secret desire of sin. He can infuse that Divine passion, the hunger and thirst after righteousness. He can shed abroad in our hearts the love of God. He can strengthen the vacillating will. He can enable us to set our affections on

^a Ps. cxxxix. 1 and 23, 24.

things above. As we ponder these things, we long for His heavenly assistance ; we pray for it. Our prayer will not be refused. For it will be preferred by our Great High Priest, who says, I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever. And Him the Father heareth always.

The issue will be most blessed : *that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy holy Name.* “ Perfectly love Thee,” that is, with entire self-surrender. We do not expect to attain sinless perfection in love or obedience on earth ; but we do pray with the Psalmist, Unite my heart to fear Thy Name, and long to echo the apostle’s experience, This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark.^a And then it is well to realize we are on our way to sinless perfection. He will present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.^b The interval is short at the longest before Christ will present His bride, the Church, to Himself in glorious beauty, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blame before Him in love. And at this sacred feast we may humbly but confidently expect to have our love to God quickened and confirmed. There is room for illimitable growth and expansion in this, for we shall love Him just as we know

^a Phil. iii. 13, 14.

^b Jude 24.

and believe His love to us. And the measure of love is the measure of delight. Thus, and thus only, shall we worthily magnify His holy Name, the end and design of our creation, our highest glory and our chiefest good,—magnify Him in thought, word, and deed, by walking with Him in holy fellowship, by praising Him continually with joyful lips, and by patiently and cheerfully fulfilling the appointed duties of our daily life. Nor is this presumption in His sight, who has said, This people have I formed for Myself: they shall show forth My praise. Our strength is in Christ our Lord.

When meditating on this collect in our preparation for the Holy Communion, it may be helpful to us to breathe in prayer the following version of the *Veni Creator*, a hymn which has expressed the longings of the Church for the heavenly assistance of the Holy Spirit for more than eight hundred years.

"Ye have an unction from the Holy One."—JOHN ii. 20.

Creator Spirit, make Thy throne
The hearts which Thou hast sealed Thine own ;
With grace celestial fill and warm
The bosoms Thou hast deigned to form.

To Thee, Great Comforter, we cry,
O highest gift of God most High.
O fount of life, O fire, O love,
Baptize, anoint us from above.

Us with Thy sevenfold gifts endow,
 Of God's right Hand the Finger Thou;
 And from His pledged munificence
 Enrich our lips with utterance.

Enflame, enlighten all our powers ;
 Breathe love into these hearts of ours ;
 Our body, strengthless for the fight,
 Strengthen with Thy perpetual might.

Keep far aloof our ghostly foe,
 And ever-during peace bestow :
 With Thee our Guardian, Thee our Guide,
 No evil can our steps betide.

With heavenly joys our service crown ;
 On earth pour heavenly graces down ;
 From chains of strife Thy saints release,
 And knit them in the bonds of peace.

Vouchsafe us in Thy light to see
 The Father and the Son and Thee,
 Our God from all the ages past,
 Our God while endless ages last.

Be glory to the Father, Son,
 And blessed Comforter, in One.
 Grant we may through the Christ inherit
 Thy grace and glory, Holy Spirit. Amen.

Tr. E. H. B.

THE COMMANDMENTS.

¶ Then shall the Priest, turning to the people, rehearse distinctly all the TEN COMMANDMENTS ; and the people still kneeling shall, after every Commandment, ask God mercy for their transgression thereof for the time past, and grace to keep the same for the time to come, as followeth.

Minister.

God spake these words, and said ; I am the Lord thy God : Thou shalt have none other gods but Me.

People. Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Minister. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them : for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me, and show mercy unto thousands in them that love Me, and keep My commandments.

People. Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Minister. Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain : for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh His Name in vain.

People. Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Minister. Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do ; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man-servant, and thy maid-ser-

vant, thy cattle, and the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.

People. Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Minister. Honour thy father and thy mother; that thy days may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

People. Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Minister. Thou shalt do no murder.

People. Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Minister. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

People. Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Minister. Thou shalt not steal.

People. Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Minister. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

People. Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.

Minister. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his.

People. Lord, have mercy upon us, and write all these Thy laws in our hearts, we beseech Thee.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

THE apostle's words are express, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup."^a And bearing this in mind our Church instructs us in the closing

^a I Cor. xi. 28.

question and answer of the Catechism. "What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper? To examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death; and be in charity with all men." If then we ask how we shall rightly fulfil this solemn duty of self-examination, our Church further exhorts us "to examine our lives and conversations by the rule of God's commandments."

Hence we see the importance and significance of the position which the Ten Commandments hold in our Communion Service. We do well to remind ourselves of the lofty supremacy of these commandments. They were spoken by God Himself, amid the awful solemnities of Sinai, in the audience of all Israel. They were written by the finger of God in the two tables of stone. They were deposited in the Ark of the Covenant beneath the Mercy-Seat. After these words were spoken, it is recorded God added no more, for they contain in themselves the sum and substance of man's duty to God and to his fellow-men. One word indeed comprises them—love; for love is the fulfilling of the law, and our Lord has taught us that they may be briefly comprehended in two great commandments, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But in the Ten Com-

mandments this germinal principle of love is sufficiently unfolded to grapple with the conscience and regulate our life before God and man.

The law, we read, was our schoolmaster (or tutor) to bring us to Christ.^a The all-important function of the law in our education for Christ's service on earth and for His kingdom in heaven is twofold. In the first place it convinces us of sin, for by the law is the knowledge of sin; and demonstrating that we cannot save ourselves by our own obedience, it prepares us to welcome the free salvation of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Secondly, it directs us, as the children of God, in the happy paths of conformity with the mind of our Father and Saviour.

In the first place the law is our tutor to bring us to Christ by convincing us of sin. When this faithful guardian and monitor takes charge of our wilful and wayward hearts, it notes innumerable failures and transgressions. This will appear if we consider the simplest and most obvious claims of the Ten Commandments and apply them to ourselves, remembering that, while man looks at the outward appearance, the Lord looks at the heart.

^a Ο νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστὸν, Gal. iii. 24. "The *παιδαγωγός* was a faithful slave intrusted with the care of the boy from his tender years till puberty, to keep him from evil, physical and moral, and accompany him to his amusements and studies" (*Alford*). And to this substantially Bishop Lightfoot agrees, saying, "The *παιδαγωγός* had the whole moral direction of the child."

1. *God spake these words and said, I am the Lord Thy God: thou shalt have none other gods but Me.*—The solemn impressive sanction of all the commandments to Israel was their redemption from Egypt. Some forty days only had elapsed since they had passed through the cloven waters of the Red Sea under the guardianship of the fiery cloudy pillar; and now the voice of the living God was heard out of the midst of the fire, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Every one who heard that voice was the Lord's freed-man. Every heart throbbed with the joy of liberty. To us there is a yet holier sanction, sealed to us in baptism, even the eternal redemption of Calvary. He who speaks to us and says, I am the Lord thy God, has revealed Himself to us in the Gospel as our Father, our Saviour, our Comforter. But what is it to have God for our God, and to have none other but Him? It is to believe in Him, to fear Him, and to love Him with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength. Who of us must not confess that we have mistrusted, and disobeyed, and grieved our God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, times without number? Who of us will not pray, Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified?

2. *Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven*

image, etc.—This commandment breathes the words of our Lord, God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.^a Has ours always been spiritual worship? Have we never set up idols in our hearts? Have we never worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever? How remarkable those words heard amid the thunderings and fires of Sinai, “Them that love Me and keep My commandments”! To us they are re-echoed in accents which fell from the lips of Jesus in the upper room on the night of His Passion, If ye love Me, keep My commandments. God is love; and infinite Love is justly jealous of any rival, and claims our supreme affection and adoration. Have we always rendered it? Alas! to us belongeth confusion of face, but to the Lord our God (for ever blessed be His Name) belong mercies and forgiveness although we have rebelled against Him.

3. *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord Thy God in vain, etc.*—When Moses turned aside to behold the burning bush, God said unto him, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. When the children of Israel were permitted to worship at the door of the tabernacle, they were taught by divers washings and sacrifices to adore the spotless holiness of Him who dwelt among

^a John iv. 24.

them. And when a vision is vouchsafed us of the heavenly worship, we learn that the Seraphim veil their faces and their feet with their wings, and the Cherubim rest not day and night saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. All revelation testifies that God is very greatly to be feared in the assembly of His saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about Him. What then has our access to God been? Has His holy Name always passed over our lips with reverence and devout recollection? Have not our hearts too often been, like the temple before it was cleansed by Jesus, crowded with the traffic of this world? Who does not mourn over the shortcomings of his prayers and praises? Thanks be to God that we have a High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and who bears the iniquities of our holy things.

4. *Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day, etc.*—The evangelical prophet Isaiah, standing midway between Moses and Christ, was moved by the Holy Ghost to say, If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.^a Do we love

^a Isa. lviii. 13, 14.

this blessed day of rest? Do we cheerfully consecrate it to the service of our God? It will be a golden link to us between the rest of the first paradise which was shadowed by the fall, and that sinless Sabbath rest which remaineth for the people of God. Furthermore, remembering that the glory of the seventh day is now transferred to the first day of the week, on which Jesus rose from the dead, and is thereby raised to yet higher spiritual privilege, Sunday should be to us a day of resurrection joy. Do we find "an Easter Day in every week"? And inasmuch as it is the firstfruits of the week, it should shed the happy glow of heaven's light upon all other days. Are we faithful in the use of all time, remembering that the night of this world is far spent and the day of eternity at hand?

5. *Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long, etc.*—This is the first commandment with promise. And yet disobedience to parents is one of the dark signs of these last perilous days.^a How many homes are blighted by the self-willedness and independence of children! Do we cherish a tender love and grateful respect to our father and mother, or to those who are in the place of parents to us in our homes? Do we obey those who are over us in the Lord, because they watch for our souls, and do we submit ourselves to their godly admonitions?^b And do we

^a 2 Tim. iii. 2.

^b Heb. xiii. 17, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13.

yield a loyal service to our sovereign and to those who are in authority over us in our land? Do we render this dutiful submission humbly, cheerfully, and graciously?

6. *Thou shalt do no murder.*—As these words fall upon our ear, perhaps the first instinct of every heart is to reply, This is a depth of wickedness which I know nothing of. Yet soon our Lord's sermon on the Mount, in which He tells us that causeless anger is a breach of this command, “will recur to our mind, and the solemn saying of the apostle, Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” Have we then put away from us all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and evil-speaking, with all malice? Are we on our guard against those things which are the occasions of quarrels? all contemptuous speaking of others, all derision, all taking up reproaches and groundless prejudices against others, in a word, all uncharitableness? Yea, more—for only to be free from malice were the praise of a stone, not of a man—are we kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us?^c

7. *Thou shalt not commit adultery.*—By this command everything contrary to chastity of life and purity of heart is strictly forbidden. The

^a Matt. v. 21-26. ^b 1 John iii. 15.

^c Eph. iv. 31, 32.

extreme sin, violation of the marriage vow, is mentioned ; but it embraces all others of the same class, and forbids, as our Lord teaches us in His Sermon on the Mount,^a every unholy thought, or desire, or look. The enemy of our souls may assault us by the imagination, or by the ear, or by the eye. Have we, if tempted, resisted every assault, saying with the saintly Joseph, How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ? Do we daily keep under the body, and bring it into subjection ?^b Do we shepherd and pasture our thoughts in all things that are true, and honourable, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report ?^c Do our hearts respond to that utterance of the Holy Spirit, He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the King shall be his friend ?^d Is ours the beatitude, Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God ?^e And seeing we have purified our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, do we love one another with a pure heart fervently ?^f

8. *Thou shalt not steal.*—The sum of this command is perfect honesty in our dealing with others, even as tried by the golden rule, All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.^g It forbids all taking from

^a Matt. v. 27-30.

^b I Cor. ix. 27.

^c Phil. iv. 8.

^d Prov. xxii. 11.

^e Matt. v. 8.

^f 1 Peter i. 22.

^g Matt. vii. 12.

others, whether by force or fraud, that which rightly belongs to them, and any consent or complicity with those who thus despoil or defraud others. It forbids all unjust and unequal dealing with others, in whatever station of life we are : subjects depriving those in authority of the honour or tribute due to them ; the rich depriving the poor of their justly earned wages, or oppressing them by hard bargains and unrighteous regulations ; the poor depriving the rich of their dues, whether as labourers, or servants, or clerks, squandering their masters' time, wasting their property, or in any way defrauding them of service promised and stipulated for. It forbids borrowing and paying not again.^a And it forbids also all indirect dishonesty, such as slothful self-indulgence,^b a careless expenditure, which casts upon others a burden we ought ourselves to bear,^c a disregard of the command, "Owe no man any thing,"^d and making haste to be rich.^e Nor must we forget that there are other rights more sacred than money or worldly property, the reciprocal claims of rulers and subjects, of pastors and people, of teachers and scholars, of friends and neighbours. This command breathes, Render to all their dues. Surely patient and prayerful self-examination will draw us to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in our time of need.

^a Ps. xxxvii. 21. ^b 2 Thess. iii. 6. ^c 1 Tim. v. 8.

^d Rom. xii. 8.

^e Prov. xxvii. 20.

9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.—The most grievous violation of this command is the bearing false witness on oath against another, thus breaking the third commandment likewise, by invoking the Searcher of all hearts to attest a lie. But the prohibition includes all slander, either the invention or willing acceptance or repetition of false reports ; all detraction, or lessening the character of others, when we cannot hear of their excellences without mentioning their weak points, or when we lower their influence by recalling faults which they have probably confessed and their Lord has forgiven ; all needless suspicion, for charity thinketh no evil ; all harsh, severe judgment of others, for though Christian love does not permit us to call evil good, it does oblige us to put a favourable construction upon the conduct of others wherever it is possible, and to beware of a captious cavilling spirit. Have we been free from all bearing false witness against others, from all slander, from all detraction, from all groundless suspicion, from all censorious judgment ? When reluctantly compelled to admit that others have acted wrongly, have we been quick to discern any softening redeeming traits in their fall ? And have we sought to cast the beam out of our own eye, before offering to pull out the mote from our brother's eye ? Who does not pray for pardon for the past, and more grace for the time to come ?

10. *Thou shalt not covet, etc.*—This commandment alone expressly mentions heart - sin, but it thus supplies a key to unlock the others.^a The root of covetousness is a heart not satisfied with the love of God. For this reason covetousness is declared to be idolatry,^b for some earthly object is longed for and lusted after till it is set up as an idol on the throne of the heart. There are two ways in which covetousness mainly reveals itself, discontent at our own lot, and craving that which belongs to another. In a world of sin there will always be wants ; we are compassed with necessities as with infirmities. And the man who fixes his eyes on these, forgetting the mercies he enjoys, will always find matter for discontent. This temptation besets the rich quite as much as the poor. And discontent at our own lot very easily begets a covetous desire for that which is our neighbour's, an inward longing to possess that which he wishes to keep, and which we cannot lawfully acquire ; perhaps his homestead, the most obvious of his possessions, as Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard ;^c or his wife, on closer acquaintance coveting his domestic happiness ; or his servants, for faithful and affectionate servants are among the choicest gifts God gives to His people ; or his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is his, so minute and particular is God's observation, who, if He forbids sin in one form will not tolerate it in another. Have we

^a Heb. iv. 12.

^b Col. iii. 5.

^c 1 Kings xxi. 4.

then never been guilty of covetous envious desires ? Has ours always been that godliness with contentment which is great gain ? Have we habitually crushed all unkind feelings towards others who have more of this world's goods than ourselves ? Have we never allowed any earthly object to usurp God's place in our affections, which is the throne ?

As we ponder these ten holy commandments, who does not confess, By the law is the knowledge of sin ? Who does not confess with the patriarch, " If man will contend with God, he cannot answer Him one of a thousand "?^a The apostle's witness is true, By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight.^b Nay, more than this, " As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse : for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."^c We are verily guilty before God ; we can only stand afar off with the publican, and cry, God be merciful to me a sinner. Is it so with us ? Then are we prepared to welcome the assurance, Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. God sent forth His Son to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons ; and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father : wherefore thou art

^a Job ix. 3.

^b Rom. iii. 10.

^c Gal. iii. 10.

no more a servant but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. And now the commandment, so holy and just and good, is no longer an accuser and an enemy, but a faithful monitor and a trusted friend. For now we are the children of God, and are trying to walk in the footprints of Him who said, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God : yea, Thy law is within My heart."

"The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."—JOHN vi. 51.

I hunger and I thirst ;
Jesu, my manna be :
Ye living waters, burst
Out of the rock for me.

Thou bruised and broken Bread,
My lifelong wants supply ;
As living souls are fed,
Oh feed me, or I die.

Thou true life-giving Vine,
Let me Thy sweetness prove ;
Renew my life with Thine,
Refresh my soul with love.

Rough paths my feet have trod,
Since first their course began ;
Feed me, Thou Bread of God ;
Help me, Thou Son of Man.

For still the desert lies
My thirsting soul before ;
O living waters, rise,
Within me evermore.

MONSELL.

THE COLLECTS FOR THE QUEEN.

¶ Then shall follow one of these two Collects for the Queen, the Priest standing as before, and saying,

Let us pray.

ALMIGHTY God, whose kingdom is everlasting, and power infinite ; Have mercy upon the whole Church ; and so rule the heart of Thy chosen Servant *VICTORIA*, our Queen and Governor, that she (knowing whose minister she is) may above all things seek Thy honour and glory : and that we, and all her subjects (duly considering whose authority she hath) may faithfully serve, honour, and humbly obey her, in Thee, and for Thee, according to Thy blessed Word and ordinance ; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with Thee and the Holy Ghost liveth and reigneth, ever one God, world without end. *Amen.*

Or,

Almighty and everlasting God, we are taught by Thy holy Word, that the hearts of Kings are in Thy rule and governance, and that Thou dost dispose and turn them as it seemeth best to Thy godly wisdom : We humbly beseech Thee so to dispose and govern the heart of *VICTORIA* Thy Servant, our Queen and Governor, that, in all her thoughts, words, and works, she may ever seek Thy honour and glory, and study to preserve Thy people committed to her charge, in wealth, peace, and godliness : Grant this, O merciful Father, for Thy dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

WE now come to the two (alternative) collects for our sovereign, our country, and our Church.

It may seem to us strange at first sight to be thus drawn into national life in the midst of deep searchings of heart and the preparation for the most spiritual and heavenly service of the Lord's Supper. But to have omitted these prayers would have left one important element of our many-sided life untouched in our Communion Service. The Ten Commandments have just affirmed to us not only our duty to God, but also all the claims of family and social life. And now these collects for our Queen, our fatherland, and the whole Church remind us we are subjects, and citizens, and members one of another, and that these facts involve corresponding duties for which we are responsible to God.

Let us thank God for the robust and masculine faith of the compilers of our liturgy. Their faith was no weak thing, which was ashamed or afraid to grapple with this practical world. It interpenetrated their whole life.

In the first collect we appeal to Him "whose kingdom is everlasting and power infinite." When about to plead with God for our Church and Queen and country, how duly we remind ourselves that He to whom we come sits upon the throne of the universe from everlasting to everlasting. The kingdom of our sovereign is but a province of His boundless empire. For her we pray that "she, knowing whose minister she is, may above all things seek the honour and glory of God," than which no holier motive can govern the soul, no

loftier standard regulate the life. And this petition for our Queen demands one that answers to it for her people, claiming their heaven-taught obedience and service. And these intercessions are offered under the sanction of the blessed Word and ordinance of our God, by whom kings rule and princes decree justice.

And the second collect asks that all heavenly and earthly blessings may be so vouchsafed to our Queen that they may flow down from the sovereign on the throne to every subject of her dominions, her study being to preserve the people committed to her charge in wealth (*i.e.* weal or wellbeing), peace, and godliness. Our forefathers were not ashamed to pray for national integrity and national godliness. May we, their children, hold fast these priceless heirlooms, which have come down to us from a simpler, and perhaps a grander, age.

As we ponder these collects, the apostle's words will recur to our mind, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men ; for kings, and for all that are in authority ; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour."^a We have cause indeed for humiliation, intercession, and thanksgiving. Humiliation for our national sins, covet-

^a I Tim. ii. 1-3.

ousness, pride, luxury, intemperance, impurity, unbelief, disbelief, secularism, dishonour done to God's holy Name, and Word, and day, and house, and Sacraments. Intercession, that noble exercise of our royal priesthood, spreading in ever wider circles from our own hearths and homes to the flock of which we are members, the community in which we dwell, the Church whose children we are, the country we love, the many lands of Christendom, the regions of missionary toil, the whole world for which Christ died. And lastly, giving of thanks for God's distinguishing mercies to us as a Church and nation ; for the light of His Gospel planted on our shores from the earliest Christian ages ; for our national growth and for our signal deliverances ; for the blessed Reformation, not running into excess as in some lands, but casting off the evil which had gathered round the truth, and retaining and cherishing the good ; for the wonderful revival of evangelical life and Church order during the last hundred years ; for the effusion of the Holy Spirit, the ingathering of souls, and the many times of refreshing which have been granted us from the Presence of the Lord.

And the issue of our prayer to usward is that we may lead "a quiet and tranquil life in all godliness and gravity" (*Revised Version*), a quiet and tranquil life, and this in the sphere of godliness (or reverence) and gravity, that calm dignity which beseems a child of God and an heir of glory. To

rise in the morning and hold communion with God in the study of His Word and at the footstool of His Throne ; to serve Him without fear all the day ; to eat our bread with gladness and singleness of heart ; to enjoy the communion of saints, none making us afraid ; to recruit our strength, wearied with weekday toil, in the happy services of the Lord's day and at the Holy Table of His love ; to lay us down every night in peace, a day's march nearer home, attended by the ministry of angels, and at rest under the unsleeping Eye of our Father in heaven : these, which are such common and everyday mercies, are yet so closely interwoven with our life to Godward that whoso ponders them will not think these prayers for our Church unbecoming a place in our highest and holiest acts of worship.

Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear,
It is not night if Thou be near ;
Oh may no earthborn cloud arise
To hide Thee from Thy servant's eyes.

Abide with me from morn till eve,
For without Thee I cannot live :
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without Thee I dare not die.

Thou Framer of the light and dark,
Steer through the tempest Thine own ark ;
Amid the howling wintry sea,
We are in port if we have Thee.

The rulers of this Christian land,
'Twixt Thee and us ordained to stand,

THE LORD'S TABLE.

Guide Thou their course, O Lord aright ;
Let all do all as in Thy sight.

Come near and bless us when we wake,
Ere through the world our way we take,
Till in the ocean of Thy love
We lose ourselves in heaven above.

The Christian Year.

THE COLLECTS FOR THE DAY.

¶ Then shall be said the Collect of the Day.

THE royal Preacher says, “ Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God : for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth : therefore let thy words be few.”^a The collects of our Prayer-Book seem especially to fulfil these requirements. They are brief: they are reverent: they are full of meaning; and their meaning is expressed in the choicest words. In these words our fathers and our fathers’ fathers, from generation to generation, have poured out their hearts to God. And they are as fresh to-day as when first written. Nor is the reason hard to discover. They are steeped in the needs of the Church militant, they are cast in the mould of Holy Scripture, they lead us through Jesus Christ to the footstool of infinite everlasting Love.

It would be obviously quite beyond the limit of this treatise to enter upon any detailed examination of these matchless forms of prayer. But I may remind the reader of those great groups of subjects into which they most readily fall. I do not profess

* Eccles. v. 2.

most thankfully receive the inestimable benefit of Christ's sacrifice for sin, but also daily endeavour ourselves to follow the blessed steps of His most holy life.

(5) On "The Word of God," see collects 2nd in Advent, St. John the Evangelist, St. Mark, St. Bartholomew, St. Luke, SS. Simon and Jude, St. Paul.

On "Prayer," 2nd after Epiphany, 10th, 12th, 23rd after Trinity, Quinquagesima, 1st and 3rd Good Friday.

No words could express more simply and strongly the Church's unwavering trust in the power of the Word of God and prayer.

(6) On "The Imitation of Saints," see collects for St. Stephen, the Innocents, St. Andrew, St. Thomas, SS. Philip and James, St. Barnabas, St John the Baptist, St. Peter, St. James, St. Matthew, All Saints' Day, all which breathe the spirit of the apostle's charge, that ye be not slothful, but imitators of those who by faith and patience inherit the promises.

And (7) on "The Coming and Kingdom of Christ," see collects for 1st in Advent, the Epiphany and 6th after Epiphany, Easter Even and 4th after Easter, Sunday after Ascension, 6th, 11th, 13th, 14th after Trinity. There is a peculiar solemnity about these collects which speak of things to come, a chastened and

tempered sobriety combined with the most unhesitating grasp of faith.

My object in this chapter has been the very humble one of supplying my readers with an index to the collects, so that if they need a prayer on any of the subjects named, they may the more readily turn to it. But it is difficult to estimate too highly the influence which the collects have had, interwoven as they are with our Communion Service. In the reverent use of them we draw very nigh unto God, while He draws nigh unto us.

"Him that cometh to Me I will in nowise cast out."—JOHN vi. 37.

Just as I am—without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidd'st me come to Thee—
 O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am—and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot—
 O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am—though tossed about
With many a conflict, many a doubt,
Fightings and fears within, without—
 O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am—poor, wretched, blind;
Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
Yea, all I need, in Thee to find—
 O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am—Thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because Thy promise I believe—
 O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am—Thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down;
Now, to be Thine, yea, Thine alone—
O Lamb of God, I come.

Just as I am—of that free love
The breadth, length, depth, and height to prove,
Here for a season, then above—
O Lamb of God, I come.

C. ELLIOTT.

THE EPISTLES.

¶ And immediately after the Collect the Priest shall read the Epistle, saying, The Epistle [or, The portion of Scripture appointed for the Epistle] is written in the — chapter of — beginning at the — verse. And the Epistle ended, he shall say, Here endeth the Epistle.

"THE present selection of Epistles and Gospels may be traced through our English service books as far back as the time of Augustine. They occur for the most part in the Sarum Missal, with which those of York and Hereford usually coincide, and are found at an earlier date still (tenth century) in the manuscript missal of Leofric, Bishop of Exeter. They are also identical with those given in the most ancient lectionaries of the Roman Church" ^a. This hoar antiquity of their selection gives additional interest to our study of these chosen portions of Holy Scripture.

The gift of the inspired Epistles to the Church was in fulfilment of our Lord's promise, Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.^b Jesus Christ came forth from God to declare the Name of the Eternal Father. But it was reserved for the

^a Prayer Book Interleaved, p. 85. ^b John xvi. 13.

Holy Spirit after the day of Pentecost to write that Name in all its grace and glory upon our hearts and lives. This will appear very plainly if we compare those portions of the Epistles and Gospels, which are selected for our meditation from week to week in the Prayer Book. The Gospels for the most part bring before us the facts of our Lord's life, His words and His works. The Epistles describe the effect of those facts in our hearts, and show how the life of Christ is to be reproduced in our life.

Hence the invaluable aid which the Epistles, as forming part of our Communion Service, supply for self-examination. Inasmuch as they present a constant succession of fresh truth, they differ from the Ten Commandments, which are read every week, and contain the inflexible and unchangeable moral law. The Commandments are the first great standard of reference; but the Epistles reveal to us the mind of Christ as written by the Holy Spirit on the mind of man.

This will be best seen by a few examples.

Take, for instance, the "First Sunday in Advent." The Gospel tells of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem and of His welcome by His disciples. The Epistle leads us on to His Second Advent, and calls us to cast off the works of darkness and to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. The collect gathers up the teaching of both.

Or take the "Sunday after Christmas Day." The



Gospel tells of the birth of our Lord and of His names, Jesus and Emmanuel. The Epistle speaks of our receiving the adoption of sons, and of the Spirit crying in our hearts, Abba, Father.

Or take "The Circumcision." The Gospel narrates this fact in our Lord's life. The Epistle urges that obedience of faith, of which circumcision was the sign and seal to Israel, as baptism is to us.

Or take "The Epiphany." The Gospel declares the manifestation of the infant Saviour to the wise men from the East. The Epistle tells of the great missionary embassy to the heathen, which was the life-work of St. Paul, which is our bounden duty and service, and which is the object of absorbing interest to the angels of God.

Or take quite a different instance, "Quinquagesima Sunday." The Gospel tells of Christ's supreme proof to man in laying down His life for us (compare Luke xviii. 31 with John xv. 13). The Epistle describes what true love is in the believer.

Or take the "First Sunday in Lent." The Gospel records Christ's temptation. The Epistle leads us to inquire whether we are willing to bear our daily cross as St. Paul and his fellow-soldiers bore it.

Or take the "Sunday next before Easter." The Gospel tells how Christ humbled Himself, even to the death of the Cross. The Epistle urges, Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ.

Or take "Easter Day." The Gospel narrates the story of the Resurrection. The Epistle bids us, if we are risen with Christ, to seek those things which are above.

Or take "Ascension Day." The Gospel gives the fact from St. Mark's record. The portion chosen for the Epistle^a from Acts i. reminds us how we, like the apostles, are called to wait for the promise of the Father and to receive power from on high.

Or to select but one instance more, "The First Sunday after Trinity." The Gospel is the warning parable of Lazarus neglected at the rich man's gate. The Epistle beseeches us, Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

Yes, these Epistles are the gift of Jesus to His Church by His Spirit to unfold to us more legibly the Gospel charter of salvation, to teach us more deeply of ourselves and of our God, to lead us along the narrow path of life, and to educate us for the inheritance of the saints in light. No student of them who prays, That which I know not teach Thou me, shall fail to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

"I flee unto Thee to hide me."—Ps. cxliii. 9.

Jesu, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly,

^a In twenty-four instances other portions of Scripture are chosen for the Epistle, and generally with peculiar force.



While the nearer waters roll,
 While the tempest still is high.
 Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
 Till the storm of life be past ;
 Safe into the haven guide,
 O receive my soul at last.

Other refuge have I none,
 Hangs my helpless soul on Thee ;
 Leave, ah ! leave me not alone,
 Still support and comfort me :
 All my trust on Thee is stayed ;
 All my help from Thee I bring ;
 Cover my defenceless head
 With the shadow of Thy wing.

Thou, O Christ, art all I want ;
 More than all in Thee I find :
 Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
 Heal the sick, and lead the blind.
 Just and holy is Thy Name ;
 I am all unrighteousness :
 Vile and full of sin I am ;
 Thou art full of truth and grace.

Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
 Grace to cover all my sin ;
 Let the healing streams abound,
 Make and keep me pure within :
 Thou of life the fountain art,
 Freely let me take of Thee :
 Spring Thou up within my heart,
 Rise to all eternity.

C. WESLEY.

THE GOSPELS.

¶ Then shall he read the Gospel (the people all standing up) saying,
The holy Gospel is written in the — chapter of — beginning at
the — verse.

THE direction that the people stand during the reading of the Gospel comes down to us from the earliest times, and is a custom significant of the instinctive reverence of the Church for the words of her Lord. St. Chrysostom bids the people "stand with soul and ear erect when the Gospel is read." And in the Apostolical Constitutions of the fifth century is the direction, "When the Gospels are in reading, let all the priests and deacons and all the people stand up in great quietness, for it is written, 'Be still and hearken, O Israel;' and again, 'Do thou stand here and listen.'" Upon this custom Hooker writes, "It sheweth a reverent regard to the Son of God above all other messengers, although speaking as from God also." In conformity with this reverent regard for the Gospels, the custom has come down to us from very ancient times, although not prescribed in our present Prayer Book, of singing the versicle before the Gospel is read, "Glory be to Thee, O

Lord." And in many English churches the people still say or sing after it, "Thanks be to Thee, O Lord, for Thy holy Gospel." When these precious portions of the Word of God are read, may ours be the spirit which replies, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

There are ninety-one selections from the narratives of the four Evangelists given as Gospels in our Prayer Book. And these may easily be gathered into four groups :—

- (1) There are thirty-eight incidents (other than miracles) in our Lord's life.
- (2) There are twenty of His miracles recorded in nineteen Gospels.
- (3) There are twelve of His parables given in eleven Gospels.
- (4) There are twenty-three exhortations including prophecies.

(1) Taking these four groups in order, we shall find in the first the main incidents of our Lord's life treasured up for us.

St. John the Baptist's Day.—The birth of His forerunner.

The Annunciation.—The angel's message to the Virgin.

Sunday after Christmas.—The angel's message to Joseph.

Christmas Day.—The incarnation of the Eternal Word.

Circumcision.—His obedience to the law.

Epiphany.—His manifestation to the Gentiles.

Innocents.—The martyrdom of the infant children at Bethlehem.

Presentation.—His presentation in the Temple.

1st after Epiphany.—His questioning of the doctors at twelve years of age.

1st in Lent.—His temptation.

St. Andrew and St. Matthew.—The call of Andrew, Peter, and Matthew.

Trinity Sunday.—Our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus.

3rd in Advent.—His testimony to John Baptist.

St. Matthias.—His joy that babes receive what the wise refuse.

5th in Lent and 18th, 23rd after Trinity.—His controversies with the Pharisees.

St. Peter.—His question, “Who say ye that I am?” which drew forth the confession on which His Church is builded.

St. James.—His answer to Salome's request for her two sons.

St. Luke.—His mission of the Seventy.

1st in Advent.—His entry into Jerusalem.

10th after Trinity.—His weeping over the city.

St. Bartholomew.—The strife among His apostles who should be greatest.

Sunday before Easter, Monday, Tuesday, Wed-

nesday, Thursday, Friday in Holy Week.—The story of the Cross.

Easter Even.—The sepulchre.

Easter Day.—The resurrection.

Easter Monday.—The walk to Emmaus.

Easter Tuesday and 1st after Easter.—His coming to them in the upper room.

St. Thomas—The conviction of the one who doubted.

St. John the Evangelist.—His witness to His beloved disciple.

Ascension Day.—The evangelistic charge and the Ascension.

Thus from the manger to Olivet these great events of our Lord's life are presented to us in the selected Gospels. Oh that year by year this portraiture of Jesus Christ may be graven on our souls ! For these Gospels supply constant subjects for self-examination ere we draw nigh to the table of our Lord, and lead us to ask whether we with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Lord the Spirit.*

(2) The miracles, though also incidents in our Lord's life, may well stand in a group by themselves. Of the thirty-five miracles which are fully recorded by the Evangelists, no less than twenty (one being

* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

given twice) appear in the Gospels of our Communion Service, namely:—

2nd after Epiphany.—The water turned into wine at the marriage feast.

3rd after Epiphany.—The healing of the leper and of the centurion's servant.

4th after Epiphany.—The tempest stilled and the Gadarene demoniacs healed.

Quinquagesima.—The cure of the blind man near Jericho.

2nd in Lent.—The Syrophenician woman's daughter healed.

3rd in Lent.—The dumb demoniac healed.

4th in Lent and 25th after Trinity.—Five thousand fed.

Wednesday before Easter.—Malchus' ear healed.

5th after Trinity.—Miraculous draught of fishes.

7th after Trinity.—Four thousand fed.

12th after Trinity.—Blind man of Decapolis cured.

14th after Trinity.—Ten lepers cleansed.

16th after Trinity.—Widow's son raised.

17th after Trinity.—Man with dropsy healed.

19th after Trinity.—Palsied man restored.

21st after Trinity.—Nobleman's son cured by a word.

24th after Trinity.—Issue of blood stanch'd and Jairus' daughter raised to life.

How truly these works of power bear witness

of our Lord! They reveal Him as One who sympathizes with every need, as feeding the hungry and supplying wine for the festal board, as healing every sickness, as stilling the tempest, as baffling all the power of hell, as raising the dead. Whatever necessity the examination of our hearts and lives discloses, let us come in the simplicity of faith and cast ourselves on Him who is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by Him.

(3) *The Parables.* Of the thirty, or, as sometimes reckoned, thirty-two parables recorded by the Evangelists, twelve are contained in the selected Gospels, namely :—

- Sexagesima.*—The parable of the Sower.
- 5th after Epiphany.*—The Tares among the Wheat.
- Septuagesima.*—The Labourers hired at different Hours.
- 1st after Trinity.*—The Rich Man and Lazarus.
- 2nd after Trinity.*—The Great Supper.
- 3rd after Trinity.*—The Lost Sheep and the Lost Piece of Money.
- 9th after Trinity.*—The Unjust Steward.
- 11th after Trinity.*—The Pharisee and Publican.
- 13th after Trinity.*—The Good Samaritan.
- 20th after Trinity.*—The Marriage Supper.
- 22nd after Trinity.*—The Unmerciful Servant.

How large a field of revealed truth these twelve

parables cover ; telling of the sowing of the incorruptible seed in diverse hearts, of the enemy scattering tares, of the cry of the penitent, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," of the lost found, of the joy of angels, of labour in the Master's vineyard, of the claims of brotherly compassion, of the tender offices which love will render to the suffering, of the wise forecasting of futurity, of the Gospel feast, of the bridal supper of the Lamb, of the different issues of lowly piety and worldly grandeur ! How they offer a key which unlocks the manifold teachings of things seen and temporal ! Oh for the open eye ! oh for the unsealed ear ! For it is not too much to say that the man, who lived in the light of these truths, would be wise for time and for eternity.

And (4) we have direct exhortations and consolations and prophecies which fell from the lips of Jesus. These are twenty-three in number. Of these six are taken from the Sermon on the Mount (namely, in the Gospels for *All Saints' Day*, *4th*, *6th*, *8th*, *15th after Trinity*, and *Ash Wednesday*), and include the Beatitudes, and lessons on the forgiveness of injuries, on mercifulness, on fasting, on fruit the test of character, and on God's care for His children.

No less than nine (namely, the Gospels for *3rd*, *4th*, *5th after Easter*, *Sunday after Ascension*, *Whit Sunday*, *St. Mark*, *SS. Philip and James*,

St. Barnabas, SS. Simon and Jude) are taken from the last discourse of our Lord with His apostles.^a The character of the Good Shepherd is sketched in the Gospels for *the 2nd after Easter* and *Tuesday in Whitsun Week*.

The concluding portion of our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus is given in the Gospel for *Monday in Whitsun Week*.

On St. Michael's Day we have words about ministering angels ; *on St. Stephen's* we have the prediction of the fall of Jerusalem ; *on the 2nd in Advent* and *the 6th after Epiphany* prophecies of the Second Advent ; and *on St. Paul's Day* promises of rewards of self-sacrifice.

Here we have the words of Him who spake as never man spake. His Sermon on the Mount is the purest morality ever breathed or conceived. His last discourse with His disciples is the sweetest consolation ever poured into human hearts. Truly all His words are as apples of gold in network of silver. And if only week by week we read and hear them in the spirit of prayer and of self-application, we shall reap the fruit of our Master's intercession for His people, which ever lives before God, Sanctify them through Thy truth : Thy Word is truth.

"*I am that bread of life.*"—JOHN vi. 48.

Jesu, Thou joy of loving hearts,
Thou Fount of Life, Thou Light of men,

^a John xiv.-xvi.

From the best bliss that earth imparts,
We turn unfilled to Thee again.

Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood ;
Thou savest those that on Thee call ;
To them that seek Thee, Thou art good ;
To them that find Thee, All in All.

We taste Thee, O Thou living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still ;
We drink of Thee, the Fountain-head,
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill.

Our restless spirits yearn for Thee,
Where'er our changeful lot is cast :
Glad, when Thy gracious smile we see ;
Blest, when our faith can hold Thee fast.

O Jesu, ever with us stay ;
Make all our moments calm and bright ;
Chase the dark night of sin away ;
Shed o'er the world Thy holy light.

Tr. RAY PALMER.

THE CREED.

¶ And the Gospel ended, shall be sung or said the Creed following, the people still standing as before.

I BELIEVE in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible :

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made : Who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, And was made man, And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried, And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, And ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead : Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Lord, and Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets. And I believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the life of the world to come. Amen.

THIS is called the Nicene Creed, because it was framed and adopted by the General Council of the whole Church held at Nicæa, in the year of our

Lord 325, under the presidency of the first Christian Emperor Constantine. That Council was summoned under his auspices especially to define and declare the truth of God regarding the eternal Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, which had been impugned by Arius and his followers. Representatives attended from every province and nation in the vast Roman Empire. There were bishops from France and Spain, from Syria and Persia, from the far North and from Egypt. And many of those fathers, writes Theodoret, appeared who bore in their bodies marks of the Lord Jesus; some deprived of an eye, some of a leg, some burned on the hands, pledges of suffering they had borne for Christ. Arius, too, was present and his companions. And in the middle of the council chamber was placed on a throne a copy of the Holy Gospels, in token that they sought only to speak to the Church what God should speak to them. And then after fervent prayer this Creed, embodying and enriching the language of former creeds, was agreed upon and issued as expressing the faith of the Church of the living God.

It originally closed with the words, "And I believe in the Holy Ghost;" and the clauses that follow to the end were adopted at the second General Council, held at Constantinople A.D. 381, to meet various heresies which had sprung up in the fourth century. The whole Creed thus enlarged was confirmed in the third General Council, held at

Ephesus A.D. 431, and again ratified A.D. 451 in the fourth General Council, held at Chalcedon.

No human form of faith, therefore, based as every clause is upon God's Word written, could have greater authority. And it is surely fitting for us, before engaging in the highest act of worship and partaking of the Supper of the Lord, thus to declare our union and communion with the saints of all ages in the One Object of our common trust and adoration. In the Baptismal Service an unfeigned assent and consent to the Apostles' Creed is required either from the candidates for baptism or from their sponsors. The Apostles' Creed is a shorter and simpler utterance of the same faith ; and when the baptized come forward to partake of the Holy Communion, it is only reasonable to expect that they should have a fuller knowledge of the truth. This they confess in the Nicene Creed.

The broad outlines of this Creed affirm with unmistakable clearness (1) a child's trust in the One Great Father of us all ; (2) a pardoned sinner's trust in his Divine Redeemer ; (3) a saint's trust in the Holy Ghost, the Comforter ; and then (4), as founded on these verities, our belief in that Church which is militant here on earth and triumphant for ever in heaven. And surely there is something most animating and strengthening in thus declaring our faith, the faith of our fathers and of our fathers' fathers from generation to generation, ere we kneel at the table of their Lord and ours. It is a holy

hymn of praise, and is thus ordered in the rubric to be either sung or said. But whether said or sung, we may view this and the other creeds as the watchwords or war-songs of the armies of the Lord of Hosts, rehearsed from age to age as they march from victory to victory, till they enter the gates of that city whose Builder and Maker is God.

But, pursuing the broad outlines indicated above, we have first in this Creed the declaration of a child's trust in the one God and Father of us all.

When we come to the Holy Communion of the body and blood of Christ, we come as children gathering round our heavenly Father's board. We rest on the first and simplest of all relationships, "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us? It is He who hath made us, and not we ourselves. We are the offspring of God." We have a claim on Him who made us, a child's claim on a Father. As one has sung—

"Thou who art rich in giving, canst give claims,
And that same need of Thee that we do feel
Is as a claim on Thee to give Thyself."

It is true that through the Fall and sin we have been wayward prodigal children, who have often wounded our Father's heart, and wandered from our Father's home. But in this feast of love, which speaks of atonement and forgiveness and reconciliation, He meets every contrite believing communicant saying, This My son was dead, and is

alive again; he was lost, and is found. And continually then He lifts up the light of His countenance upon us; and it breathes nothing but peace and love, a peace which passes understanding, a love which passes knowledge. Herein we cast ourselves at our Father's feet, and He raises us up, and embraces us, and bids us welcome with His voice and with His smile, and gives us a place among His children, and assures us of a heritage in glory. Our very souls respond, "Abba, Father."

But this near access to One who is glorious in holiness as well as abundant in mercy can only be for us sinners through our Divine Redeemer. Hence we continue and affirm our faith in our one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God,^a Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made.^b Here we plant our feet on the Rock of our salvation. We affirm our trust in Jesus Christ as the coequal, coessential, coeternal Son of God. And how otherwise could He be our Saviour and Redeemer? For God Himself has declared, I, even I, am Jehovah; and beside Me there is no Saviour.^c

^a God of God (*Θεὸς ἐκ Θεοῦ, Deus de Deo*), i.e. God from God, or God begotten of God, Light begotten of Light, Very God begotten of very God.

^b By whom, i.e. by the Son (John i. 3) all things were made.

^c Isa. xliii. 11.

Yea, His awful curse guards as with a flaming sword the majesty of His supreme throne, Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." And to this agree the constant utterances of the Holy Ghost, which from the beginning to the close of the Sacred Scriptures speak of the Saviour as God and Lord, as summed up in the opening of St. John's Gospel, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;" and as sealed in the saying which fell from His own lips, "I and My Father are One."

And now, having declared His eternal power and Godhead as the Word by whom all things were made, we retrace in a few solemn weighty sentences what He has done for us men and for our salvation; how He came down from heaven; how He was incarnate of the lowly Virgin; how He became a perfect Man among men; how He humbled Himself, even to the death of the Cross, for us; how He rose from the dead the same Jesus that died; how He ascended into the heavens, and there has taken His seat at the right hand of the Father enthroned in glory, till He shall come again to judge the quick and the dead, and to reign for ever and ever. This brief recapitulation of the great facts of our redemption is a blessed preparation for the feast of Communion before us. If we are going to enjoy

"Jer. xvii. 5.

an hour's society with a human friend to whom we largely owe our lot of earthly happiness, it rekindles our gratitude to retrace in thought some of his special acts of goodness. We greet him with a warmer pleasure, because we have been reminding ourselves of what he has done for us. And so when we mind to come to the table of our Lord, it is most helpful thus briefly to rehearse the greatest wonders of His grace. It freshens our memory. It deepens our gratitude. It quickens our love. It draws our heart to His heart. And it makes us long for the time when we shall see Him as He is, and love Him as we ought.

But these heavenly affections are the work of the Divine Spirit. We cannot touch the secret springs of our own heart. The music of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God would not awaken us. We should be as a deaf man in a concert of sweetest sounds, as a blind man in a gallery of noblest pictures, as a sick man without appetite at the banqueting-table of a prince. We are not left thus. Ours is no such mutilated Gospel. And our Creed continues, "I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Lord," and Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son,^b Who with the Father and the Son

^a There should be a comma after the word Lord. The clause does not affirm that the Holy Ghost is "the Lord of life," as He is "the Giver of life," though this is true; but that the Holy Ghost in whom we believe is the Lord Jehovah.

^b The bitterly controverted words, "and the Son" (*Filioque*), may securely rest on the comparison of such Scriptures as

together is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets." Here the deepest necessities of our souls are met. Here is One who can waken to life in us that which is dead ; who can pour light into that which is dark ; who can enable in us that which is powerless ; who can sprinkle our conscience with the blood of Christ ; who can Himself speak peace to us, and say to us and in us, Thy sins be forgiven thee ; who can teach us how to pray, helping our infirmities and winging heavenward our desires ; who can shed abroad the love of God in our souls, and so reveal to us things to come that our heart shall be, where our treasure is, in heaven.

Of all the articles of our Creed, ere we draw nigh to the table of our Lord, none is more precious than this, I believe in the Holy Ghost. If ever our seasons of Communion are lifeless and fruitless, it is because we have neglected to grasp the promise, which Jesus bequeathed to His Church the same night in which He ordained this feast of love, It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.⁴ This Almighty, all - wise, ever - present Helper and Teacher and Comforter and Guide is with us. He is the Eternal Jehovah. He is the Author of life. His is the river of grace, pure as crystal, which proceedeth from the

Matt. x. 20 with Rom. viii. 9 ; Luke xi. 13 with John vii. 37-39 : Acts ii. 33 with Rev. xxii. 1.

⁴ John xvi. 7.

throne of God and of the Lamb. And we worship and adore Him with the Father and the Son for ever.

And lastly, as built upon these eternal verities, we affirm our belief that there is one Catholic and Apostolic Church ; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins ; and we confess that we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Yes, blessed be God, amid all the schisms and divisions, the rents and discords of this time of warfare in the world, there is one Catholic and Apostolic Church gathered from all kindreds and peoples and tongues and nations, part in heaven and part on earth, yet one, indissolubly one, in Christ, for there is one body and one Spirit ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all. This Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone. All the true members of this Church are washed in the blood of Christ, their sins are forgiven for His Name's sake, of which forgiveness holy baptism is the sign and seal: And the night is far spent. The morning of the resurrection is at hand, which shall usher in the shadowless and endless day of eternity.

These are the massive facts on which we rest. And each one for himself, as enabled by Divine grace, says truly, I believe. Every guest at the Lord's Table has thus affirmed his affiance, that which is deepest and truest in his soul—no uncertain pledge of eating bread hereafter in the kingdom of

God, for this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.

“Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name?”
—REV. xv. 4.

Father of heaven above,
Dwelling in light and love,
 Ancient of days,
Light unapproachable,
Love inexpressible,
Thee, the Invisible,
 Laud we and praise.

Christ the eternal Word,
Christ the incarnate Lord,
 Saviour of all,
High throned above all height,
God of God, Light of Light,
Increase, infinite,
 On Thee we call.

O God, the Holy Ghost,
Whose fires of Pentecost
 Burn evermore,
In this far wilderness
Leave us not comfortless :
Thee we love, Thee we bless,
 Thee we adore.

Strike your harps, heavenly powers ;
With your glad chants shall ours
 Trembling ascend :
All praise, O God, to Thee.
Three in One, One in Three
Praise everlasting,
 World without end.

E. H. B.

THE SERMON.

¶ Then the Curate shall declare unto the people what Holy-days, or Fasting-days, are in the week following to be observed. And then also (if occasion be) shall notice be given of the Communion ; and Briefs, Citations, and Excommunications read. And nothing shall be proclaimed or published in the Church, during the time of Divine Service, but by the Minister ; nor by him anything but what is prescribed in the Rules of this Book, or enjoined by the Queen, or by the Ordinary of the place.

¶ Then shall follow the Sermon, or one of the Homilies already set forth, or hereafter to be set forth, by authority.

AFTER the Nicene Creed and the reading of Church notices, there follows, according to the rubric, the sermon or homily, which is generally preceded by the singing of a hymn. The song of praise, devoutly joined in by those who strive to make melody, at least in their heart, to the Lord, will be a gracious preparation for listening to the message which the ambassador of the Cross delivers in his Master's Name. Never was the injunction more needed, Take heed how ye hear, than in our own day. For the multiplication of services and sermons will without due thought make the hearer critical, captious, and careless. Let us remember, The full soul loatheth an honeycomb ; but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.^a If we come hungering and thirsting

^a Prov. xxvii. 7.

after righteousness, we shall generally find something in the preacher's words which feeds us with the bread of life and leads us by the living fountain of waters. The words spoken may be very simple, and the utterance altogether unadorned, still if ours is the attitude of Cornelius' household when he said to the apostle, Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God,* we shall not be sent empty away. And when any truth is especially borne in upon our souls, we shall do well to treasure it in our memory and make it the subject for meditation and prayer in the after intervals of the Communion Service.

"He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him."
—2 TIM. i. 12.

Jesus, I will trust Thee, trust Thee with my soul ;
Guilty, lost, and helpless, Thou canst make me whole.
There is none in heaven or on earth like Thee :
Thou hast died for sinners—therefore, Lord, for me.

Jesus, I may trust Thee, Name of matchless worth,
Spoken by the angel at Thy wondrous birth ;
Written, and for ever, on Thy cross of shame,
Sinners read and worship, trusting in that Name.

Jesus, I must trust Thee, pondering Thy ways,
Full of love and mercy all Thine earthly days :
Sinners gathered round Thee, lepers sought Thy face—
None too vile or loathsome for a Saviour's grace.

Jesus, I can trust Thee, trust Thy written Word,
Though Thy voice of pity I have never heard.
When Thy Spirit teacheth, to my taste how sweet—
Only may I hearken, sitting at Thy feet.

* Acts x. 33.

Jesus, I do trust Thee, trust without a doubt :
Whosoever cometh, Thou wilt not cast out ;
Faithful is Thy promise, precious is Thy blood ;
These my soul's salvation, Thou my Saviour God.

M. J. WALKER.

¶ Whilst these Sentences are in reading, the Deacons, Churchwardens, or other fit person appointed for that purpose, shall receive the Alms for the Poor, and other devotions of the people, in a decent basin to be provided by the Parish for that purpose ; and reverently bring it to the Priest, who shall humbly present and place it upon the Holy Table.

FROM the earliest age the Church of Christ has been used to connect gifts and offerings for God's service and worship with the commemoration of the Lord's Supper. And there is something almost instinctive in the desire, when we remember His great love who gave Himself for us, to offer some token of our love to Him. It is a practical pledge of our self-consecration when we thus acknowledge, All things come of Thee, and of Thine own have we given Thee. It seems to sanctify all our other gifts made at other times, when we thus solemnly from week to week in the House of Prayer give of our substance to the service of our Lord and Master.

How wonderful is the transforming power of faith and love ! It can transmute that money which is the instrument of the world's slavery and idolatry into a grateful tribute of a child's affection to a loving Father. Money, as often gotten by wrong, is called the mammon of unrighteousness. Money, as loved for its own sake, is the food and fuel of that covetousness which God abhorreth. Money, as lavished on selfish aims and objects, is filthy lucre. But money, as gotten by honest labour, as coming from God, as spent faithfully on the manifold claims of

life, as given to the poor for Christ's sake, as dedicated to the work and worship of God, is a talent committed to His servants by the Lord of the household ; and is, if rightly employed, a proof of their fidelity, yea, it may be, what St. Paul says the gifts of the Philippians were, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.^a There is nothing, then, of necessity secularizing, or out of harmony with the highest devotion, in this offertory part of our Communion Service.

There are twenty sentences selected in our Prayer Book, one or more of which is appointed to be read while the offerings are being collected.

The opening four sentences are taken from the Sermon on the Mount. The first (Matt. v. 16) reminds us that we are children in the family of God, and calls upon us to walk worthy of our Father in heaven.

The second (Matt. vi. 19, 20) tells us that our treasure-house is above.

The third (Matt. vii. 12) gives us "the golden rule" of life among our fellow-men, so brief, so plain, so easy of self-application, so heart-searching, so all-embracing.

And the fourth (Matt. vii. 21) admonishes us that our love must be not in word only, but in deed and in truth.

Not seldom now a few strains of music are played between each of the sentences ; and when this is

^a Phil. iv. 18.

done we may usefully employ the time in lifting up our heart to God that the last sentence read may be a reality to us. Thus regarding these four opening sentences we may pray—

Holy Father, grant that I may so walk as a child of light that others may know I am a child of Thine.

Blessed Saviour, teach me how to lay up treasure in heaven, and enable me to set my affections on things above.

Gracious Spirit, help me not to look on my own things only, but on the things of others also, and to act by them as I should wish them to act by me, if I were in their place and they in mine.

O God, let my love be real, and prove itself by acts of love to Thee and Thy Church.

The fifth sentence (Luke xix. 8) stands by itself, and touches on the great subject of restitution. On this see remarks on the first Invitation below. But when this sentence is read we may pray, “Lord, show me myself; and if in any manner whatever, consciously or unconsciously, I have wronged another, help me to make good the wrong I have done to him, and grant me to dedicate my all to Thee.”

Of the next five sentences (Nos. 6-10) four are taken from the Epistles to the Corinthians, and one from that to the Galatians; and they all especially refer to the support of those who minister in holy things at home, and to the missionary work of the Church abroad. As they are read we remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, “The

labourer is worthy of his hire ; " and again, " Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." And surely we may pray, Lord, help me to bear my part in the service of Thy sanctuary and in the promotion of Thy cause and kingdom.

The next three sentences (Nos. 11-13) are Gal. vi. 10, and 1 Tim. vi. 6, 7, and 17-19. There is something peculiarly solemn in the use of these Scriptures in our Communion Office, telling us, as they do, of the brief passing opportunities of this life which will never recur, those transient seasons which make up what we call time ; telling us that our possessions are only our own for this little span of life ; and also telling us that in this fugitive time we may lay up store for eternity. What adds to the solemnity is, that the latter part of the second of these sentences occurs among the opening words of the Burial Service ; and will, unless the Master first returns, be read over our lifeless tabernacle when we have rendered in our great account. Surely, when one or another of these is read, we may well pray silently, Lord, grant me to work while it is called to-day, as knowing that the night cometh when no man can work : grant me godliness with contentment here : and grant me of whatsoever Thou givest me, whether it be more or less, to give the firstfruits unto Thee, being assured that whatsoever I sow here I shall reap hereafter.

Now follow three sentences (Nos. 14-16) which tell of God's mindfulness, of His delight in the gifts

of His children, and of the sure outcome of His secret love in the heart. They are Heb. vi. 10; xiii. 16; and 1 John iii. 17; and they assure us that God is pleased to hold Himself bound to reward His own grace in His children, that the real sacrifice of that which we might spend on ourselves but give to Him is acceptable in His sight, and that love to our brother is indeed a necessary fruit of the indwelling love of God. Perhaps an account-book of our daily and yearly expenses, an exact record of the way in which we lay out the income with which God intrusts us (and if we do not keep such a record, God does in the book of His remembrance), would be a faithful exponent of our character. It would tell whether we rendered to all their dues. It would show whether we conquered or yielded to self-indulgence. It would prove where we laid up treasure, in heaven or in earth. It would reveal with a strange transparency what was most precious in our eyes. Let us therefore earnestly pray, Lord, grant me ever to remember that no act of love done for Thee or Thy people will be forgotten by Thee; yea, that Thou art pleased to regard every gift of self-denial with Thy gracious favour. O Master, when Thou askest, Lovest thou Me? may I be able to answer, Thou knowest that I love Thee, and have sought to prove my love by my service to Thy children.

The next two sentences (Nos. 17, 18) are taken from the Apocryphal Book of Tobit. Of the Apocry-

phal books our 6th article says, "The Church reads them for example of life and instruction of manners, and yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine." The two here selected urge the duty of almsgiving on the powerful pleas of the light of God's countenance here and of His gracious reward hereafter. And, when they are read, we may well re-echo the Psalmist's prayer, There be many that say, Who will show us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us.

In the last two sentences (Prov. xix. 17 and Ps. xli. 1) we have the inspired utterances of Solomon and of David his father. Solomon's words tell us, how God regards what is done for His poor as done for Himself. The donor shall be no loser. In the Lord's own time and way there shall be an overflowing recompense. And David pronounces the closing benediction in this beautiful cluster of the maxims of pious and brotherly love. The disciple of charity is the disciple of Christ, who said that not even a cup of cold water given to a disciple in the name of a disciple shall lose its reward. There shall be a retribution of grace. The friend of the poor is twice blessed. He has come to the succour of his fellow-creature in the hour of his brother's suffering and need. But all men are born to trouble. The cloud of sorrow will sooner or later overshadow all. Then the Lord will not forget His servant. The bow shall be seen in the cloud. And God will grant him, as He sees

best, a happy issue out of all his afflictions. As these last Scriptures fall upon our ears we may pray, Compassionate Father, grant me the pitiful eye and the open, ready hand ; grant me humbly and tenderly and wisely to help the sick and needy ; and of Thine infinite mercy deal graciously with me when my time of trouble shall come.

We have only skimmed the surface of these sentences : a patient study of them will reveal many lessons we have passed over ; but the briefest consideration awakens many subjects of self-inquiry. Have we acted as faithful stewards of that which God has given us ? Have we denied ourselves all vain and foolish expenses ? Have we given a just proportion of our income to God and to His cause ? Even under the patriarchal dispensation Jacob said, Of all that Thou givest me, I will surely give the tenth unto Thee.^a Many Christians give far more than this, constrained by love to Him who gave all for us. What is our rule ? And, above all, do we give with gladness of heart, knowing that the Lord loveth a cheerful giver ?

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."—GAL. vi. 14.

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,

^a Gen. xxviii. 22.

My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God ;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down ;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown ?

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small ;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

WATTS.

THE PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH MILITANT.

¶ And when there is a Communion, the Priest shall then place upon the Table so much bread and wine as he shall think sufficient.

After which done, the Priest shall say,

Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church militant
here in earth.

ALMIGHTY and everliving God, who by Thy holy apostle hast taught us to make prayers, and supplications, and to give thanks, for all men; We humbly beseech Thee most

mercifully [** to accept our alms and oblations, and*] to receive these our prayers, which we offer unto Thy Divine Majesty; beseeching Thee to inspire continually the universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord: And grant, that all they that do confess Thy holy Name may agree in the truth of Thy holy Word, and live in unity and godly love.

We beseech Thee also to save and defend all Christian kings, princes, and governors; and specially Thy servant *VICTORIA* our Queen; that under her we may be godly and quietly governed: And grant unto her whole Council, and to all that are put in authority under her, that they may truly and indifferently minister justice, to the punishment of wickedness and vice, and to the maintenance of Thy true religion and virtue. Give grace, O heavenly Father, to all bishops and curates, that they may both by their life and doctrine set forth Thy true and lively Word, and rightly and duly administer Thy holy Sacraments: And to all Thy people give Thy heavenly grace; and especially to this congregation here present;

that, with meek heart and due reverence, they may hear, and receive Thy holy Word ; truly serving Thee in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life. And we most humbly beseech Thee of Thy goodness, O Lord, to comfort and succour all them who in this transitory life are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity. And we also bless Thy holy Name for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear ; beseeching Thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of Thy heavenly kingdom : Grant this, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. *Amen.*

THE entreaty (*Oremus*, etc.) is instructive. There is no similar preface to other prayers in this office. But the danger is great of being absorbed in our own personal needs and cares, perhaps spiritual needs and spiritual cares ; but still, however momentous, not extending beyond ourselves or the immediate circle in which we move. When, therefore, the words, "Let us pray for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here in earth," fall upon our ears, it is as a trumpet call reminding us, "No man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself ;" we are soldiers in the army of the Lord of hosts ; we are members of the whole family in heaven and earth. The very demand thus made upon us elevates us. It is like a strong arm lifting us out of the narrow cell of our own little interests, and advancing us to the high privilege of being intercessors for our brethren with God.

i. In the opening of the prayer we plead God's warrant for this, as if it might otherwise be pre-

sumptuous in us to take so much upon ourselves. The inspired direction referred to^a is express. We are the Lord's remembrancers;^b we are of the royal priesthood;^c and it appertains to the function of the priesthood to pray for others.

2. We then humbly beseech God most mercifully to accept our alms and oblations and prayers. Our alms are represented by those which we have then cast into the Lord's treasury. If our oblations^a refer to the bread and wine, which have also now been placed on the table of the Lord, it is a simple and beautiful token that we desire to honour the Lord with our substance and with the firstfruits of all our increase. As one has said, "The bread and wine, God's good gifts to us, are offered to Him to be blessed by Him, and given back to us as the signs and sacraments of better gifts still." And then with our gifts we offer our prayers. Our alms can relieve but a few cases of distress out of many, but our prayers may embrace the needs of the whole Church of God. May it

^a 1 Tim. ii. 1. ^b Isa. lxii. 6, margin. ^c 1 Peter ii. 9.

^a The word oblations probably also embraced other offerings of fruits of the earth, which used aforetime to be given to God at this service. Some maintain that oblations refer to larger gifts of money; but as the words of the rubric in the margin are "alms or oblations," it seems that a distinction in kind is intended. There is no semblance of superstition in this act; indeed, it is a protest against Romish error, for the bread and wine are not consecrated when they are thus placed on the Lord's table and spoken of as "oblations."

only be true of us which was said by the angel to Cornelius, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God.^a

3. We proceed then to pray, and our first petition is that the universal Church may be inspired with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord. We plead for truth and unity, not union without truth, but unity in the truth. There are those who would keep in the background the rock foundations of our faith, that they may fraternize with those who deny or obscure them. Such is not the burden of this prayer. Truth is put first, the truth of the holy Word of God, and then unity and concord. Nor can we pray too earnestly that all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity may be drawn ever closer to Him, and thus closer to each other. For this was the prayer of our great High Priest on the night of His Passion,^b and the fulfilment of this will be the mightiest engine for the conversion of the world.

4. In the next paragraph of this prayer we beseech God to save and defend all Christian kings and governors and those in authority under them, and to give them grace to maintain true religion and virtue. Never were such supplications more needed. It is the nineteenth century of the Christian era. And we might have expected that long ere this all the nations of Christendom would have learned the angels' song, Glory to God in the

^a Acts x. 4.

^b John xvii. 21.

highest ; on earth peace, goodwill towards men. But, alas, what dark passions of lawlessness and anarchy are a-work among men ! In some lands what misrule, in others what disaffection, in almost all what mutual distrust ! Who does not pray that God's hand may be over those who are at the helm of state in every country, shielding them from wrong, and enabling them to rule in His faith and fear and love ?

5. And having prayed for those who govern the State, we intercede for those in authority in the Church of Christ, and for all those who minister in holy things, praying that all bishops and curates (*i.e.* those who have the care of souls) may by their life and doctrine set forth the true and lively Word of God, and rightly and duly administer His holy Sacraments. And if any need the supplications of their brethren in these difficult and dangerous days, they are the rulers of our Church and those intrusted with the charge of souls. The burden would be greater than man could bear, if it were not for the constant intercession of the great High Priest and the prayers of His people for those set over them in the Lord.

6. Having prayed for pastors, we go on to pray for their flocks. The same Holy Spirit, who teaches His ministering servants to speak His truth, must enable His waiting people to receive it in the love of it, and having received it, to act it out in their life and conversation.

7. But we are in a world not only of toil, but of trouble ; not only of service, but of suffering and sorrow. And we go on to pray for all those who in this transitory life are in trouble, sorrow, and sickness, or any other adversity. It is this sympathy with all which is one of the special beauties of our Prayer Book. Seldom, indeed, can this prayer be offered in a congregation, where there are not some present who think of a parent or child, a brother or sister, a master or servant, a friend or neighbour, who needs to be remembered before God. Our prayers in His house are like the angels ascending on Jacob's ladder : let us be assured there will be angels descending with answers of peace and benediction. No one but God can know all the wrestling intercession which has reached His ear through this one sentence alone. And no one but God can trace all the messages of grace vouchsafed in response.

8. And now we come to the closing paragraph of this wonderful prayer. We have prayed for the Church militant here in earth, but that Church is indissolubly joined to the Church triumphant within the veil. They are as truly one, as the camp of Israel was one, when the first ranks had crossed the Jordan, and some were in the bed of the river, and some were still on the farther side. Those who sleep in Jesus are for ever ours. They are a possession of which nothing can deprive us. They do not need our poor prayers ;

for they are in the immediate presence of Christ, which is far better. But we may, we must, thank God for them. We are about to gather round the table of their Lord and ours. Ere long we shall all meet in His kingdom and glory at the marriage supper of the Lamb. For we, with all those who have gone home before us, are that bride whom He will present faultless before the throne with exceeding joy.

These things we ask for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. These saints, unutterably blessed as they are, are not our mediators or advocates. We have One Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus ; One Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. We need no other. In Him we rest.

Such is the burden of this most delightful and comprehensive prayer. As we breathe its spirit, how does it raise our poor narrow selfish hearts above the little concerns which too often enchain them ! We climb the mountain-side. We leave the mists below us. The air is purer, the horizon widens at every step. And at last from the summit we gaze over the far landscape of the Church, even unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.

"Christ is the Head of the Church."—EPH. v. 23.

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord ;

She is His new creation
By water and the Word :
From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride,
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died.

Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation
One Lord, one faith, one birth ;
One holy Name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses
With every grace endued.

Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed :
Yet saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up, "How long ?"
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song.

'Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumults of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace for evermore ;
Till with the vision glorious
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest.

Yet she on earth hath union
With God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion
With those whose rest is won :
O happy ones and holy !
Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with Thee.

STONE.

and Blood of Christ." "In this holy Sacrament," it is said, "our heavenly Father has given His Son to be our spiritual food and sustenance." It is affirmed to be "so divine and comfortable a thing to those who receive it worthily." It is spoken of as "that holy mystery," "such a heavenly feast," "that holy Table," "the holy Communion." For while our Church rejects with intense loathing and indignation those low carnal materialistic views of the Lord's Supper which hold that the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ; while she maintains in the closing rubric of this office that "the bread and wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored (for that were an idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians), and the natural body and blood of our Saviour Christ are in heaven and not here, it being against the truth of Christ's natural body to be at one time in more places than one;" while in the words of our 31st article she asserts, "The offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual, and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone: wherefore the sacrifices of masses, in the which it was commonly said that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits;" yet she is not afraid to speak in the exalted language of this Invitation con-

cerning the spiritual excellence and dignity of this Sacrament.

And most justly. For what privilege can transcend that of the closest heart communion with the Incarnate Son of God in that memorial feast of love, which He has Himself ordained? There is only one thing higher; and that will be when we shall see Him as He is, and are invited to sit down as accepted guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb. It is not by minishing aught from the true significance and blessedness of this sacred feast, as plainly set forth in holy Scripture, that we shall be able to meet the dangerous errors by which some have been led astray, but by holding fast the truth of God while we reject the inventions of man.

Such being the Divine excellence of this Sacrament, we are called to self-examination, repentance, and newness of life.

This self-scrutiny, this penitence, this purpose of a holier walk, is a transaction betwixt God and the soul, to be carried on in secret with our Father, who seeth in secret, at the footstool of the throne of grace, with the sense of His eye fully open upon us, and by the light of His holy Word. We have already seen how the Ten Commandments, which stand in the forefront of the Communion Service, embrace every thought of the heart and every act of the life, being summed up in perfect love to God and man. But I would venture to suggest

a few other Scriptures as helpful standards of reference, by which we may try ourselves before God.

i. The First Epistle of St. John supplies us with the most transparent marks of those who have passed from death unto life. It was written, we are told (chap. v. 13), with this very design, that those who believe on the Name of the Son of God may know that they have eternal life. (See *Revised Version.*) It is the Christian's touchstone. Here, then, we find that the believing child of God has fellowship with the Father and the Son ; walks in the light ; has communion with the saints ; maintains a conscience sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ ; confesses his sins to God ; keeps the commandments, especially that new commandment, Love one another ; may find his place among the little children, the young men, or the fathers in the household of faith ; purifies himself, for Christ is pure ; overcomes sin ; evidences his love of the brethren by acts of love ; has the testimony of his conscience ; proves the power of prayer : has the Spirit of God ; believes and confesses the Manhood and Godhead of Christ ; increases in the knowledge of God ; abides in love ; overcomes the world by faith ; has the threefold witness of the Spirit, the water, and the blood ; and hence possesses a well-grounded assurance that he is an heir of everlasting life. Can any one, who is really desirous of knowing his true state before God, and who honestly

applies these tests, remain in doubt whether he belongs to Christ or not?

2. The twenty-fifth Psalm is a wonderful transcript of the chequered experience of the believer amid the temptations of the world. We have here (verses 1-3) the soul's rest in God; (verses 4, 5) the soul's thirst to know more of God; (verses 6, 7) the soul pleading for God's favourable remembrance; (verses 8-10) the soul's confidence in God's teaching; (verse 11) the craving for pardon under the deepest sense of need; (verses 12-15) the felicity of trust; (verses 16-21) the cry of one still battling his way amid tribulation in the world. Is this experience of God's people ours?

3. Or let us take that psalm, which perhaps more than any other reveals the penitence of a truly contrite heart, the fifty-first Psalm. We feel, as we read it, the intense conviction which the Psalmist had of the unutterable love of God, and this notwithstanding all his grievous guilt. We see how he craved pardon and purity. We mark how his sin before God swallowed up his thought of sin against man. He grieved that he himself was sinful. He clung to the atonement by sacrifice, which God had ordained. He believed in the forgiveness of sins. He longed to walk with God again in newness of life, and to serve Him by drawing others to His feet, and to praise Him once more with joyful lips. His heart was contrite, his spirit broken, but he rises above himself to the

needs of the Church of God. What know we of this contrition, whereinsoever our heart condemns us of sin ?

4. But the Sermon on the Mount is the great Gospel standard of our duty towards God and towards our neighbour. What know we in our heart and life of the Beatitudes ? What know we of that brotherly kindness which is set forth in this sermon, of that holy chastity of heart, of that solemn dread of our oath, of that forbearance and love towards those who hate us, of that unostentatious charity, of that private communion with God, of that laying up treasure in heaven, of that generosity of judgment, of that free and trustful access to the throne of grace, of doing to others as we would they should do to us, of entering in by the strait gate, of bringing forth good fruit, of building on the rock ? Who is not convicted of manifold shortcomings and sins ? Who does not pray, Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord ?

5. Or take another Scripture, Rom. xii. and xiii., which, beginning with God's claim on us, proceeds to set forth all the manifold claims of Christian society, seeing that we are all one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. What a blessed community would that be which was governed by this code of courtesy and love ! what a peaceful kingdom ! what a holy Church ! Is it the standard at which we aim ?

6. Or if we would trace the progress in the

Divine life, which might be ours, which ought to be ours, let us ponder 2 Peter i. 1-11. These verses set forth the privilege, the duty of every saint. We are therein called to go from strength to strength, to advance from grace to grace, to be changed into the image of Christ from glory to glory, till an entrance is ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom. Can we discern anything of this heavenly growth in our souls?

7. But there is a crowning aspect of the Lord's Supper—praise. It is Eucharist, thanksgiving. God claims it. He inhabits the praises of His people. Is ours the spirit of praise? Let us try ourselves by the 103rd Psalm. We have there the irrepressible utterance of a forgiven, reconciled, rejoicing heart. Do we thus thank God for the forgiveness of our sins, and the healing of our diseases, and for our life crowned with loving-kindness and tender mercy? Do we adore Him for His uprightness, and bless Him for the revelation of His truth? Do we exult in the tenderness of His grace, and throw ourselves on His Fatherly care? Do we rest on His everlasting mercy from age to age, unchanging and unchangeable? Yea, is our own tongue too feeble, so that we call on the angels of light and the hosts of glory and the ministering spirits who do His pleasure, yea, on all His works, to bless His holy Name; and yet feel that we, perforce, constrained by grateful love, must

join our feeble voice in the great tide of adoration and trust and love? Is the first and last utterance of our inmost soul, Bless the Lord, O my soul?

Who that ponders these Scriptures and uses them as standards of self-examination (many others may be used in like manner) does not long for pardon and peace and power—pardon for the past, a peace now that passes understanding, and power for the time to come; pardon through the blood of Jesus, peace under a Father's smile, the power of the anointing Spirit of holiness? All these are sealed to us in the Supper of the Lord.

There is another important subject named in this Invitation, that of Restitution. "And if ye shall perceive your offences to be such as are not only against God, but also against your neighbours, then ye shall reconcile yourselves unto them, being ready to make restitution and satisfaction," etc.

Such offences will be best illustrated by examples. The discovery of them will probably be made by us while we are measuring our hearts and lives by the second table of the law, which embraces our duty to our neighbour; though it may be that in the days of our own ignorance of God we have instilled doubts into the minds of others, or led them to trifle with the Name of the Most Holy, or induced them to violate the sacredness of the day of rest; and the recollection, long forgotten, may flash upon us while weighing our own duty to God. But let us pass to the second table.

A son or daughter is prayerfully pondering the claims of the fifth commandment, when conscience accuses them of some act of dishonour done by them to their father or mother ; the more they think over it, the more they are convinced it was wrong. What shall they do ? If the act were secret and known only to themselves, let them humbly confess it to God and seek the assurance of His pardon. But if it were such as must have caused pain to their parents, let no sense of shame prevent them from acknowledging it to their father or mother. If it be rather a sin of omission than of commission, let them not fail at once to begin and fulfil that claim : the very fact of doing it now may be a sufficient confession that it ought to have been done before.

Or again, others are weighing the sixth commandment in the light of our Lord's instruction,^a and now words or acts against a brother, prompted by an unloving, unforgiving, unchristian temper, trouble their conscience. What shall they do ? If they are sins that God only knows, for sometimes others may be quite unconscious of the unholy feelings under the influence of which we have spoken or acted towards them, let the confession be made to God. But if they are sins which have justly grieved our brother, let us frankly acknowledge the wrong to him, never so truly great as when we thus humble ourselves.

^a Matt. v. 21, 22.

Or again, others are measuring their conduct by the seventh commandment as expounded by our Lord,* and are conscious of sin, not perhaps in its grosser, but in its subtler forms. Have they caused others to stumble? Perhaps many of the consequences of the sin are quite irreparable now; and the one, whose purity of mind they sullied, has been swept far into the vortex of dissipation, or even passed, so far as they know, unsaved into the presence of God. Bitter, bitter reflection! If there are any steps which can be taken in any wise, at any cost, to repair or lessen the mischief done, let them be taken in God's Name. But surely the language of the chastened king Hezekiah will henceforth be the language of their heart, "He hath both spoken unto me, and Himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul." And furthermore, let some offering, which involves real self-sacrifice, be made year by year to those institutions which seek to save the tempted or rescue the fallen—not for a moment with the thought of any merit in the gift or of making any atonement for the sin—God forbid—but as a pledge of repentance towards God and of restitution towards society.

Or again, others are pondering the claims of the eighth commandment, and they remember acts which now they feel unjustly defrauded their neigh-

* Matt. v. 27-30.

bour of his due. Perhaps the interval is long, and all the circumstances may have probably passed from the recollection of the brother they have wronged. What shall they do? Here, I am sure, whatever has been unjustly taken or withheld by us from another must be given back to them, so that to the utmost of our power they may be no losers by our misconduct. But I am not sure that in every case this must be done openly. I think that, in some cases at least, a real though secret restitution to our neighbour, with an open confession to our God, is all that is required of us.

But once more, there is the ninth commandment guarding our neighbour's character. How many, who have never touched a fraction of another person's property, are brought in guilty here. They have surmised evil in others, till they have treated it as a fact. They have permitted themselves to speak of it first as probable, then as almost certain, then as indisputable. Events have disproved it. But they have never humbled themselves to confess and bewail the wrong. And now when they are searching their hearts before coming to the holy Communion, they see it all in the light of God's Word. Oh, the path is not doubtful here. Let them first confess all to God, and then, so far as in them lies, let them track the slander they have spread, and frankly lament their base and baseless suspicion.

I do not speak of the tenth commandment, for this lies betwixt God and the soul ; but the instances suggested above as demanding restitution may lead us to pray, Search me, O God, and know my heart : try me, and know my thoughts : and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.^a

Closely akin to this subject is the case of distressed consciences spoken of in the last paragraph of this Invitation, " And because it is requisite," etc.

It is treated as quite an exceptional case. It is not the ordinary way of a sinner finding pardon and peace. The usual method of the Holy Spirit in dealing with sin-burdened souls is sketched by the Psalmist in his own experience, " Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. . . . When I kept silence, my bones waxed old. . . . I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord ; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.^b This is strongly confirmed by the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, when the sinner smites upon his breast in the house of prayer and cries, " God be merciful to me a sinner," and goes down to his house justified.^c For the most part the general declarations of God's forgiveness as expressed in the absolution of morning and evening prayer, or in that of our Communion Service, when the minister of Christ declares the terms of Gospel forgiveness, and thus fulfils his Lord's commission,

^a Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. ^b Ps. xxxii. 1-5. ^c Luke xviii. 13.

"Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them,"^a are all that the soul needs.

But our Prayer Book admits, and all experience confirms the admission, that there are cases where the distressed and disquieted conscience seeks for further aid, an aid which Christ has graciously provided through the ministry of His Word, and generally through the pastors of His flock. I say generally through pastors, for I would not deny that the same help may sometimes be given by other experienced believers; and that, especially with the children of pious parents, their best counsellors in spiritual difficulties, as in all others, will usually be their father and mother. But, granting this, we cannot forget that the Holy Ghost has appointed ministers to feed the flock of God, and that the Chief Shepherd has commanded them to strengthen the diseased, to heal the sick, to bind up that is broken, to bring again that which is driven away, and to seek that which is lost.

This was God's covenant with Levi of old : "My covenant was with him of life and peace ; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared Me, and was afraid before My Name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips : he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth : for he is the messenger

^a John xx. 23.

of the Lord of hosts.”^a And in the new covenant the risen Lord breathed on His disciples and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost, when He ratified their ministerial office;^b and when He ascended up on high He gave apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ.^c And this work consists not only in the public proclamation of the Gospel and administration of the sacraments of His love, but also in the individual dealing with souls; as St. Paul says, We preach Christ, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.^d

These Scriptures abundantly prove, that the private personal intercourse of pastors with the members of their flocks is according to the mind of Christ.

If, then, there are any distressed souls who feel that spiritual counsel and advice would be helpful for the quieting of their conscience and for the avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness, especially before drawing nigh to the holy table, let them come to their pastor, or some other experienced minister, that he may open out to them the Word of God, and plead with them the exceeding great and precious promises of the Gospel at the footstool of the throne of grace.

^a Mal. ii. 5-7.

^c Eph. iv. 8-12.

^b John xx. 22.

^d Col. i. 28.

Let not the guilt and folly of men in the dark system of the Romish Confessional—an engine of tyranny as intolerable for the people as it is baleful for the priest—rob us of God's grace in His own ordinance of the personal ministry of His holy Word, that free unrestricted intercourse of earnest souls with those whom God has ordained to feed them with the bread of life.

It may be some needless burden is pressing down some, the very telling of which to another shows it to be without foundation in fact.

Or perhaps it is some fierce temptation of the enemy, which when met with united prayer^a is overthrown.

Or it may be some wrong done to another, which a faithful and wise mediator may set right.

Or it may be the soul is passing through a season of spiritual conflict—doubts regarding the great verities of the faith, perplexities as to the dealings of God with the Church and the world, vague but terrible fears respecting the destiny of the creature; and many a pastor can say that he has passed through the same struggles, and at least point to the narrow wicket gate of truth which led him to light and liberty.

Only let ministers be all the help to their people which God designed them to be, so that they may together draw near to the table of their One Lord and Master, having boldness to enter into the

^a Matt. xviii. 19.

holiest by the blood of Jesus, having One High Priest over the house of God, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.

"It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh."—SONG v. 2.

The sun is set, the twilight's o'er,
The night-dews fall like rain :
A Prince stands at a suppliant's door,
And knocks, and knocks again.

I slumber ; but my heart is moved
With joy and holy fear :
"Is it Thy footstep, O Beloved,
Thy hand, Thy voice, I hear ?"

"'Tis I, thy Lord, who stand and wait
Beneath the darkening sky :
Arise, unbar, unclose the gate,
Fear nothing ; it is I.

The bread of life is in My hand ;
The wine of heaven I bring :
Fulfil My tenderest last command :
Thy Bridegroom is thy King.

Eat, drink ; and muse in loving trust,
The while I sup with thee,
If this be heaven on earth, what must
My bridal banquet be."

E. H. B.

THE SECOND INVITATION.

¶ Or, in case he shall see the people negligent to come to the holy Communion, instead of the former, he shall use this Exhortation.

DEARLY beloved brethren, on —— I intend, by God's grace, to celebrate the Lord's Supper: unto which, in God's behalf, I bid you all that are here present; and beseech you, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, that ye will not refuse to come thereto, being so lovingly called and bidden by God Himself. Ye know how grievous and unkind a thing it is, when a man hath prepared a rich feast, decked his table with all kind of provision, so that there lacketh nothing but the guests to sit down; and yet they who are called (without any cause) most unthankfully refuse to come. Which of you in such a case would not be moved? Who would not think a great injury and wrong done unto him? Wherefore, most dearly beloved in Christ, take ye good heed lest ye, withdrawing yourselves from this holy Supper, provoke God's indignation against you. It is an easy matter for a man to say, I will not communicate, because I am otherwise hindered with worldly business. But such excuses are not so easily accepted and allowed before God. If any man say, I am a grievous sinner, and therefore am afraid to come: wherefore then do ye not repent and amend? When God calleth you, are ye not ashamed to say ye will not come? When ye should return to God, will ye excuse yourselves, and say ye are not ready? Consider earnestly with yourselves how little such feigned excuses will avail before God. They that refused the feast in the Gospel because they had bought a farm, or would try their yokes of oxen, or because they were married, were not so excused, but counted unworthy of the heavenly feast. I, for my part, shall be ready; and, according to mine Office, I bid you in the Name of God, I call you in Christ's behalf

I exhort you, as ye love your own salvation, that ye will be partakers of this holy Communion. And as the Son of God did vouchsafe to yield up His soul by death upon the Cross for your salvation ; so it is your duty to receive the Communion in remembrance of the sacrifice of His death, as He Himself hath commanded : which if ye shall neglect to do, consider with yourselves how great injury ye do unto God, and how sore punishment hangeth over your heads for the same ; when ye wilfully abstain from the Lord's table, and separate from your brethren, who come to feed on the banquet of that most heavenly food. These things if ye earnestly consider, ye will by God's grace return to a better mind : for the obtaining whereof we shall not cease to make our humble petitions unto Almighty God our heavenly Father.

THIS second Invitation was added to the Book of Common Prayer A.D. 1552, probably at the instance of Bucer, the Strasburg Reformer, to whom England's Church is so largely indebted. It is mainly grounded on the parable of the Great Supper.^a We may regard that parable as setting forth first God's invitation to man to receive the Gospel, and then to come to that feast of love which is the pledge and seal of the Gospel. Oh what costly love is here shadowed forth ! For this the Eternal Father must give His only Son to become man and die for us. For this the Eternal Son must delight to do the Father's will and give Himself for the life of the world. For this the Eternal Spirit must touch the secret springs of thought in every faithful communicant, for without His grace it would be a lifeless form. These mighty facts having

^a Luke xiv. 16-24.

gone before, what tender grace designed this memorial feast of love, so simple, like all God's greatest works, so fathomless in the mystery of the love it expresses, so perfectly suited to all the needs of man ! Why, then, do so many refuse to come ?

Some are living (consciously to themselves) in sin, sin which their conscience condemns, but which they palliate and excuse. They dare not come, and rightly.

Others are living so entirely in and for the world, that their hearts being overcharged with the cares of this life, they cannot make time to attend to the concerns of their soul.

Others are wavering and undecided, "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth ;" like Agrippa, they are almost persuaded ; like Felix, they will put it off to a more convenient season.

And still the Saviour's voice falls upon their ears, Come, for all things are now ready. He would not indeed have them come to His table before they come to Himself ; but He would have them come to Himself now, to-day, while it is called to-day, and then come to His table to ratify their covenant with God. As one has well said, " We come to Christ for life, and to holy Communion with life. We come to Christ for forgiveness, and to holy Communion with forgiveness. Food and strength are for the living, not for the dead."

But there are some serious persons, who are

deterred from coming by the inconsistencies of other communicants. Let such remember that we must every one give account of himself to God. Let such say with the Psalmist, I will hearken what the Lord God will say concerning me.

And there are those who stay away from the Lord's Supper because they are afraid of coming unworthily. Of this the following exhortation treats. But it is enough to answer, Our only plea is the blood of Jesus, the worthiness of Jesus.

And some who once used to come have now forsaken this feast of love. The world crept in unawares. Private prayer was reduced to its narrowest limits. Self-examination was given up. And at last the Lord's table quite abandoned. Let such remember that spiritual death is creeping over them. How terribly is the end of an impenitent backslider sketched in the "Pilgrim's Progress"! To recall but a few of his confessions : "I am what I was not once. I was once a flourishing professor, and, as I thought, fair for the Celestial City, and had even joy at the thought that I should get thither. I am now a man of despair, and am shut up in it as in an iron cage. I left off to watch and be sober. I laid the reins upon the neck of my lusts. I sinned against the light of the Word and the goodness of God. I have grieved the Spirit, and He is gone. I have tempted the devil, and he is come to me. I have so hardened my heart that I cannot repent. Oh,

eternity, eternity ! how shall I grapple with the misery which I must meet with in eternity?" Who does not echo the words of Christian, "God help me to watch and be sober, and to pray that I may shun the cause of this man's misery"?

Such is John Bunyan's picture of a man of despair. But there are those who have not thus done despite to the Spirit of grace, and who yet have grievously backslidden from God. They have forsaken the Fountain of living waters, and God has in His mercy constrained them to feel and confess that it is an evil and bitter thing to have hewn out to themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water. Perhaps months, or even years, have passed away since they came to the table of the Lord. What shall they do? Let them come as they are to the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, saying—

"Just as I am—without one plea
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee—
O Lamb of God, I come."

Let them keep back nothing from God. Let them cast all the burden, the sin, the guilt, the shame before the throne. Let them hold fast to the penitent David's prayer, Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean : wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.^a The voice of mercy shall be heard by them, Return, thou backsliding Israel,

^a Ps. li. 7.

saith the Lord ; and I will not cause Mine anger to fall upon you : for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger for ever.^a And again, I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely : for Mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel.^b And then what an assurance and seal of forgiveness is the holy Communion feast !—

“ Oh how sweet, how comfortable,
In the wilderness to see
Such provisions, and a table
Spread for sinners, spread for me ! ”

Yes, spread for sinners ; not for angels, but for penitent sinners. Come, oh come, for all things are now ready.

“ The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.”—REV. xxii. 17.

The Spirit in our hearts
Is whispering, Sinner, come :
The Bride, the Church of Christ, proclaims
To all her children, Come.

Let him that heareth say
To all about him, Come :
Let him that thirsts for righteousness,
To Christ, the Fountain, come.

Yea, whosoever will,
Oh let him freely come,
And freely drink the stream of life ;
'Tis Jesus bids him come.

Lo, Jesus, who invites,
Declares, I quickly come.
Lord, even so we wait Thine hour :
O blest Redeemer, come. ONDERDONK.

^a Jer. iii. 12.

^b Hosea xiv. 4.

THE EXHORTATION.

¶ At the time of the Celebration of the Communion, the Communicants being conveniently placed for the receiving of the holy Sacrament, the Priest shall say this Exhortation.

DEARLY beloved in the Lord, ye that mind to come to the holy Communion of the body and blood of our Saviour Christ, must consider how Saint Paul exhorteth all persons diligently to try and examine themselves before they presume to eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For as the benefit is great, if with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive that holy Sacrament (for then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink His blood ; then we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us ; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us) ; so is the danger great, if we receive the same unworthily. For then we are guilty of the body and blood of Christ our Saviour ; we eat and drink our own damnation, not considering the Lord's body ; we kindle God's wrath against us ; we provoke Him to plague us with divers diseases and sundry kinds of death. Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord ; repent you truly for your sins past ; have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour ; amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men ; so shall ye be meet partakers of those holy mysteries. And above all things ye must give most humble and hearty thanks to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the redemption of the world by the death and passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and man ; who did humble Himself, even to the death upon the Cross, for us, miserable sinners, who lay in darkness and the shadow of death ; that He might make us the children of God, and exalt us to everlasting life. And to the end that we should alway remember the exceeding great love of our Master, and

only Saviour, Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by His precious blood-shedding He hath obtained to us ; He hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of His love, and for a continual remembrance of His death, to our great and endless comfort. To Him therefore, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, let us give (as we are most bounden) continual thanks ; submitting ourselves wholly to His holy will and pleasure, and studying to serve Him in true holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. *Amen.*

THIS whole Exhortation is one of singular beauty, breadth, and power. It begins with reminding us of the necessity of self-examination before we presume to eat of that bread and drink of that cup, which are to the faithful the communion of the body and blood of Christ. It goes on to tell of the exceeding blessedness of a due reception of that holy feast, inasmuch as then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood ; we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us ; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us. It warns us of the great danger of receiving these tokens of Divine love unworthily. It enforces the duties of self-judgment, repentance, faith, holiness, brotherly kindness. It sets forth the crowning joy of praise, first for the eternal facts of redemption, and then for this memorial feast ordained for our great and endless comfort. And it closes with the sweetest, softest cadence of praise to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, even that grateful love which submits itself to the will of God and studies to lay out our life in His service.

But the solemn note of warning which is here struck against receiving the Lord's Supper unworthily is one that demands our close and prayerful attention. It was intended to awaken and warn the careless professor. It need not disquiet the humble believing child of God. Nor is it more solemn than the passage of Holy Scripture^a on which it is founded. We must carefully bear in mind that when the apostle says, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself," he does not mean by *damnation* final condemnation or eternal punishment, but temporal chastisement. The word is translated *judgment* in the Revised Version. And the meaning is transparent from verse 32, "But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

The Lord's Supper was often celebrated at Corinth together with their social evening meal, afterwards called an Agape or Love-feast. "To it the rich contributed of their wealth, and the poor of their poverty, and at its close it was usual for all amidst these tokens of mutual love to celebrate what was peculiarly the sacramental rite. But in the course of time out of this custom very unseemly disorders arose. The richer Christians at Corinth made this feast minister to their own self-indulgence, and invidious distinctions were introduced; so that they who were unable to contribute to the common

^a 1 Cor. xi. 20-34.

meal remained hungry, while others ate and drank to excess. Such scenes were intolerable" (Maclean). Thus we see that the sin against which the apostle's warning was immediately directed was the confounding the Lord's Supper with a common meal, and the indulgence of pride, selfishness, and carnal appetite. But the chastened and simple solemnity, with which the holy Communion is now administered, almost in itself precludes this danger. Only let us be on our guard that no external ritual of the service, whether poor or rich, interferes with or distracts the spiritual and heavenly exercises of the soul.

Another danger against which St. Paul warned the Corinthians is noted, chap. x. 15-22 of this Epistle. They were tempted, after communicating at the Lord's table, to participate in the idolatrous feasts of heathen worship. Is there no corresponding peril in our days? Are not mammon and the world to this nineteenth century what idol-worship was to the first century? Do we not need to bear in mind, "Covetousness is idolatry. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"? If, then, those who profess the Name of Christ are living for the world, its pleasures, honours, and wealth, as the first objects of their desire, they cannot come worthily to that feast where they say, "Here we offer and present unto Thee ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and

lively sacrifice unto Thee." Their daily walk contradicts such an avowal of self-surrender.

Another hindrance to a worthy reception of the Lord's Supper is indicated by our Lord's words, If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee ; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* We ought to be in charity with all men. Only let us observe that it is not if we have ought against our brother, *i.e.* any just cause of complaint against him, but if he has ought against us. If another has wronged us, and we from our heart forgive the injury he has done us, but he refuses to accept our overtures of reconciliation, though our spirit may be sorely bruised and grieved within us, this is no reason why we should absent ourselves from the table of our Lord. But if we have done wrong to another, and refuse to acknowledge it and ask his forgiveness ; if we ourselves are cherishing an unforgiving temper for any wrong he has done us ; if we are nursing a grudge against him, as Esau against Jacob for having deprived him of his birth-right and of his father's blessing, then we cannot come worthily to the Lord's Supper, which is a feast of love, and speaks of our being all children of One Father, and bought with the blood of One Saviour, and dwelt in by One Spirit. Let us from the heart forgive every one his brother their trespasses,

* Matt. v. 23, 24.

and so gather round our common Father's board.

But further, our Catechism reminds us that it is required of those who come to the Lord's Supper "to examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life, have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of His death, and be in charity with all men." These are the workings and actings of Divine life in the soul of the believer. If, then, these be wholly absent, there can be no life in us. These graces may be very feeble, and then the heavenly food of the Lord's Supper may be the very sustenance required. But what if there be no faith, no penitence, no hunger and thirst after holiness, no thankfulness, no love? Surely, then, there can be no life to Godward. And then to come to the Lord's table would be as useless as putting choice viands and costly wine to the lips of a corpse. The Lord's Supper is food for a living soul.

"Awful is that life of Thine
Which the Spirit's breath inspires,
And the food must be Divine
Which each new-born soul desires."

The Lord's table is for the Lord's people. The Father's board is for the Father's children.

Only let us come in simplicity of childlike trust, confessing our sins in time past, and seeking for

more grace in time to come, and we shall prove on earth the truth of that promise which eternity will not exhaust, "I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, saith the Lord."^a

"*This do in remembrance of Me.*"—LUKE xxii. 19.

According to Thy gracious word,
In meek humility,
This will I do, my dying Lord,
I will remember Thee.

Thy body, broken for my sake,
My bread from heaven shall be ;
Thy testimonial cup I take,
And thus remember Thee.

Can I Gethsemane forget ?
Or there Thy conflict see,
Thine agony and bloody sweat,
And not remember Thee ?

When to the Cross I turn mine eyes,
And rest on Calvary,
O Lamb of God, my Sacrifice,
I must remember Thee.

Remember Thee and all Thy pains,
And all Thy love to me ;
Yes, while a breath, a pulse remains,
Will I remember Thee.

And when these failing lips grow dumb,
And mind and memory flee,
When Thou shalt in Thy kingdom come,
Jesu, remember me.

J. MONTGOMERY.

^a Jer. xxxi. 13, 14.

THE CONFESSION.

¶ Then shall the Priest say to them that come to receive the holy Communion,

YE that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in His holy ways; Draw near with faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your comfort; and make your humble confession to Almighty God, meekly kneeling upon your knees.

¶ Then shall this general Confession be made, in the name of all those that are minded to receive the holy Communion, by one of the ministers; both he and all the people kneeling humbly upon their knees, and saying,

ALMIGHTY God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men; We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, Which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, By thought, word, and deed, Against Thy Divine Majesty, Provoking most justly Thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, And are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; For Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, Forgive us all that is past; And grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please Thee In newness of life, To the honour and glory of Thy Name; Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE few weighty words before the Confession are addressed to those who are truly penitent for the

past, who are living in brotherly love now, and who purpose to walk with God henceforth. Such are invited to draw near with faith and take the holy Sacrament of their Redeemer's body and blood to their comfort, after that pastors and people together have humbly confessed their sins to Almighty God. How solemn it must have been when Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up to Mount Sinai ; when they saw the God of Israel afar off, and there was under His feet a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness ; when they saw God and did eat and drink !^a How solemn it must have been when Aaron and his sons entered on their priestly office with the sin-offering and the burnt-offering and the peace-offerings and the meat-offering, and all the congregation drew near and stood before the Lord ; and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people, and there came out a fire from before the Lord and consumed the burnt-offering upon the altar !^b How solemn it must have been when the high priest, alone, once a year, went into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled the blood upon the mercy-seat, and saw the Shechinah glory through the cloud of incense !^c But surely our access to the throne of grace by faith exceeds in glory. It is closer and clearer and calmer. For we have boldness to enter into the Holiest by the

^a Exod. xxiv. 9-11.

^b Lev. ix.

^c Lev. xvi.

blood of Jesus by a new and living way, even through the veil of His flesh ; and having an High Priest over the house of God who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, we are invited to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Shall we not come with deepest self-abasement and avowal of our unworthiness and guilt and sin ?

No words could be more humbling than those of the Confession in which we unite.

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men.—These few words stretch from an eternity past into an eternity to come. We are before Almighty God, the Ruler, Governor, and Preserver of all, who in this simplest relationship thus first revealed Himself.^a We are before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was with God before the foundations of the world were laid, and in whom God reconciles all things to Himself. We are before the Maker of all things, who therefore most intimately knows us body and soul. We are before the Judge of all men, whose eyes behold, whose eyelids try the children of men now, and at whose judgment-throne we shall all stand at last. Shall we attempt to hide anything from Him in whom we live and move and have

^a Gen. xvii. 1; Exod. vi. 3.

our being? Nay, God forbid. We will pour out our hearts before Him, all our sin, all our sorrow, all our need.

We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, etc.—No words could be stronger or more humbling. But are they too strong, too humbling? It is true the believer has redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of his sins. But it is also true what one has said, that although God will never remember His people's sins to their condemnation, His people will always remember them to their humiliation. And when we repeat these words we have been searching our hearts before God by the light of His Word, by the claims of His Gospel. What duty does not rebuke us? What relationship of life, be it parent or child, brother or friend, teacher or pupil, master or servant, does not convict us of shortcoming? How often have we broken our most solemn resolutions? Alas! it is simply true, we have grievously sinned *by thought, word, and deed*. Our fugitive, evanescent thoughts, which yet make up our inner life, are all naked to Him who understands them afar off; do they not often condemn us? Our words, which pass so lightly from our lips, who can remember without trembling that of every idle word we shall give account in the day of judgment? Our deeds may be such as others approve and praise; but we cannot forget, “By Him actions are weighed;”^a

^a 1 Sam. ii. 3.

by men they are seen, by God they are weighed.
Does not this frequently write “Tekel”^a against them?

We do earnestly repent, etc.—Oh for a deeper view of sin! As we know God, we shall know ourselves. Thus the patriarch Job confesses, I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.^b Thus Isaiah cries out in his self-abasement, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.^c Thus Daniel complains, O my Lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength: for how can the servant of this my Lord talk with this my Lord?^d Thus St. Peter prayed, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”^e Thus the beloved John in Patmos fell at the feet of the Son of Man as dead, until He laid His right hand upon him, saying, “Fear not.” Probably our sense of sin before God would be a true measure of our holiness.

Yet let us not be cast down, if the words of this confession seem more lowly and contrite than we can at the time feel. We know that they are true. And there are times when the sinfulness of sin flashes upon us; perhaps when we are communing with our own heart in some lonely walk, or when

^a Dan. v. 27. ^b Job xlvi. 5, 6. ^c Isa. vi. 5.
^d Dan. x. 16. ^e Luke v. 8.

we are meditating on God in the night watches, or when something brings death and the judgment to come very vividly before us. Then the voices of the world are hushed ; the things of time fade ; we are conscious of the presence of the All-holy. We are guilty before Him. And then the remembrance of our sin is grievous ; it grieves us, how much more must it grieve the blessed God ! The burden is intolerable, that is, greater than we can bear, and therefore we cast it on the Great Sin-bearer, who was made sin for us.

Have mercy upon us, etc.—We come as children to a forgiving Father, whose heart yearns with love and pity. We plead the one prevalent Name. We cast ourselves on the mercy of God in Christ.

“ No good word or work or thought
 Bring I to gain Thy grace :
 Pardon I accept unbought ;
 Thy proffer I embrace.
 Coming, as at first I came,
 To take and not bestow on Thee ;
 Friend of sinners, spotless Lamb,
 Thy blood was shed for me.”

And so we ask, *Forgive us all that is past.* It is a great prayer, but not greater than it is in God's heart to give. The words are as fresh and precious all our pilgrim walk, as when we breathed them at our first Communion. We wash our robes anew and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.

And grant that we may ever hereafter, etc.—The contrite forgiven sinner craves to serve and please

God. What can we do for Him, whom we thus humbly but confidingly ask to receive us back into His loving favour? Our heart responds—

“ The best return for one like me,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from His gifts to draw a plea,
And ask Him still for more.”

And so we pray that henceforth we may walk in newness of life, and render to Him filial service, and enjoy the delightful communion of His smile.

“ *Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord.*”
—Ps. cxxx. 1.

Thou who didst on Calvary bleed,
Thou who dost for sinners plead,
Help me in my time of need;
Jesu, hear my cry.

In my darkness and my grief,
With my heart of unbelief,
I, who am of sinners chief,
List to Thee mine eye.

Foes without and fears within,
With no plea Thy grace to win,
But that Thou canst save from sin,
To Thy Cross I fly.

Others, long in fetters bound,
There deliverance sought and found,
Heard the voice of mercy sound,
Surely so may I.

There on Thee I cast my care,
There to Thee I raise my prayer,
Jesu, save me from despair,
Save me, or I die.

When the storms of trial lower,
When I feel temptation's power,
In the last and darkest hour,
Jesu, be Thou nigh.

J. D. BURNS.

THE ABSOLUTION.

Then shall the Priest (or the Bishop, being present) stand up, and turning himself to the people, pronounce this Absolution.

ALMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, who of His great mercy hath promised forgiveness of sins to all them that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto Him ; Have mercy upon you ; pardon and deliver you from all your sins ; confirm and strengthen you in all goodness ; and bring you to everlasting life ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

THE heart-emptying confession, in which we have poured out our very souls before God, is immediately met by this free and entire absolution, or God's declaration of the forgiveness of sins. It is as when David, pierced to the heart by Nathan's parable, confessed, "I have sinned against the Lord," and the prophet answered him, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin ; thou shalt not die."^a Every word breathes pardon and peace.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, etc.—We are still as children in the presence of a loving Father, who declares His almighty power most chiefly in showing mercy and pity. He delights in mercy. The blood - sprinkled way is open. The Holy Spirit is ready to seal forgiveness on the

^a 2 Sam. xii. 13.

penitent believer's heart. And here we plead His royal word of promise, such exceeding great and precious promises as these : " As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us."^a " Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." " I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins : return unto Me ; for I have redeemed thee." " Our God will abundantly pardon."^b " Her sins, which are many, are forgiven."^c " They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."^d

Have mercy upon you.—We have just prayed in our confession prayer, " Have mercy upon us, Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father." This voice of absolution is like the prompt echo from the throne of grace, even as when the leper cried to Jesus, " Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean ;" and Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, " I will ; be thou clean," and immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Pardon and deliver you from all your sins.—Pardon and deliverance both are needful ; the remission of the guilt of sin, and rescue from its thraldom. So when the healed leper came to be ceremonially cleansed, the priest took of the blood of the trespass-offering and put it upon the ear and hand and foot of the suppliant, in token of forgiveness. But

^a Ps. ciii. 12.

^c Luke vii. 47.

Isa. i. 18 ; xliv. 22 ; lv. 7.

^d Rev. vii. 14.

this was not all : he poured the sacred oil into the palm of his own left hand ; and having sprinkled some of it with his finger seven times before the Lord, the rest he put upon the ear and hand and foot of him that was to be cleansed, upon the blood of the trespass-offering ; and what remained was poured upon his head : thus the priest made an atonement for him before the Lord.* The blood and the oil, these well may be our watchwords at the throne of grace ; the blood of Jesus for pardon, the oil of the Holy Spirit's grace for deliverance from the power of sin.

Confirm and strengthen you in all goodness.— There is no empty aching void left. The love of the Father expels the love of the world. The beauty of holiness takes the place of the pride of life. The hunger and thirst after righteousness overcome the lust of the flesh. The joy of the Lord causes the pleasures of sin to pale. The glory, honour, and immortality set before us in the Gospel are more than all time has to offer.

And bring you to everlasting life ; through Jesus Christ our Lord.— We are children, and if children, then heirs, for God has no portionless sons : heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, who is the Heir of all things. Here the largest desires of the soul are met and satisfied. It is our Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom. He who

* Lev. xiv. 14-18.

has given us His own and only Son will with Him also freely give us all things.

"Ye shall find rest unto your souls."—MATT. xi. 29.

Jesus, I rest on Thee,
In Thee myself I hide :
Laden with guilt and misery,
Where can I rest beside ?
'Tis on Thy meek and lowly breast
My weary soul alone can rest.

Thou Holy One of God,
The Father rests in Thee ;
The voice of Thy atoning blood
Pleads evermore for me :
The curse is gone ; through Thee I'm blest :
God rests in Thee ; in Thee I rest.

The slave of sin and fear,
Thy truth my bondage broke,
And now my spirit loves to wear
Thy light and easy yoke :
The love, which fills my grateful breast,
Makes duty joy and labour rest.

Soon the bright glorious day,
The rest of God, shall come ;
Sorrow and sin shall pass away,
And I shall reach my home :
Then of the promised land possessed
My soul shall know eternal rest.

J. G. DECK.

THE FOUR COMFORTABLE WORDS.

¶ Then shall the Priest say,

Hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith unto all that truly turn to Him.

COME unto Me, all that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you (St. Matt. xi. 28).

So God loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (St. John iii. 16).

Hear also what Saint Paul saith.

This is a true saying, and worthy of all men to be received, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. i. 15).

Hear also what Saint John saith.

If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins (1 St. John ii. 1).

WITH all the Word of God spread open before them, its boundless treasures of wisdom, its springs of consolation, its wealth of love, it must have been an anxious consideration for the compilers of our liturgy which Scriptures to select for this part of our Communion Office. For these words fall upon our ears in some of the most solemn moments of life; coming immediately after that deep and wonderful confession in which we lay bare our whole heart to God, and that free gracious proclamation

of His forgiving love, they meet us when our souls are most subdued within us and most open to every holy influence and impression. Some old liturgies introduce the twenty-third Psalm in this place, and doubtless it would have a singular charm for many of us to repeat here, with a deeper insight into their meaning, the words we have loved from childhood : “The Lord is my Shepherd ; I shall not want . . . Thou preparest a table before me ; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” Other liturgies rehearse the forty-second Psalm here : “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God,” etc. ; others the Gospel message which St. Peter first preached to the Gentiles : “To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.”^a But with the whole Bible to select from, the compilers of our liturgy chose the four comfortable words above. They are very beautiful in their combination. They are a fourfold Gospel in themselves, and set before us (1) Christ as the Friend of sinners inviting the weary and heavy laden to come to Him ; (2) Christ the gift of God to man ; (3) Christ the Saviour of the lost ; (4) Christ our Advocate with the Father.

1. The first presents Jesus Christ to us as the Friend of sinners saying, “Come unto Me, all

^a Acts x. 43.

that travail^a and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." As we hear the words we seem to see Jesus in a world of sin and need, Himself a Man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs, compassed with all the sinless infirmities of our nature, and in all points tempted like as we are; we see Him inviting all the weary to come to Him, and making good His promise that He would give them rest. He healed every sickness whether of body or mind. No case ever baffled Him. He saw through and through to the very heart of things. He charged Himself with the wants of all. His forbearance was never exhausted. His pity never ran dry. His love was never once at a loss. And now more than eighteen centuries have passed, since these words were spoken at Capernaum; and ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of the children of men have taken Him at His word. And He has not failed one of them. The sinner, burdened with the weight of guilt, has found peace in His blood. The trembling naked

^a These words are so often quoted, "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary," it is difficult to realize they are not so written in our Bible or Prayer Book, and the Greek (*κοπιῶντες*) may well signify "labour unto weariness." And yet for the expression "all ye that are weary" we must go back to the Geneva version, A.D. 1557, *i.e.* fifty-four years before our present authorized translation. But the phrase "all ye that are weary" evidently struck so deep a chord in the human heart it has been impossible to stop its vibrations, so that to this day the words are more frequently quoted thus than otherwise.

soul has been clothed by Him with the garments of salvation. The struggler after holiness has been animated. The wayworn pilgrim has been soothed and refreshed. The pains of the sufferer have been assuaged; or such grace given to bear them that the Master's strength has been made perfect in the servant's weakness. The tears of the bereaved have been shared by Him, till heaven's light has broken in, and the bow has been seen in the darkest cloud. The great mystery of the unseen world has lost its terrors at the music of His words, "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Yes, He has been the Recipient of all the griefs, and all the needs, and all the fears of His people, and He has cast no suppliant out; He has sent none unhealed or empty away.

Surely there is no more convincing proof of His Supreme Godhead than this invitation given and this promise fulfilled. When the weight of the government of Israel rested on Moses he complains to God, "Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that Thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom?"^a And he asks of them, "How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife?"^a But here is One who invites all of all ages to cast themselves on His compassionate bosom. And there is no entanglement, no embarrassment, no failure, no discouragement, no delay. This Friend of the weary must needs be Almighty, All-wise, All-loving. He must be God.

^a Num. xi. 12; Deut. i. 12.

But tender and strong as the words are at all times, they are never more full of strong consolation than in our Communion Service. We have confessed all our sin. We have been assured that God has pardoned all. But is there still a soreness, a weariness? Here the Good Physician not only binds up the wounds, but pours in the oil and the wine. His voice is the very balm of Gilead.

2. The second comfortable word draws us quite near to the heart of the Eternal Father. In the first we come to Jesus, in the second we have access through Jesus unto the Father.

God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.—Here is the well-spring of our salvation in the love of God, that He gave His Son for us. It is perhaps impossible to speak of it in human language without seeming to express a conflict in the Divine mind between the Father's love, resting in perfect complacent delight upon His only-begotten Son, and His compassionate love of man. Yet the bosom of God is the seat of un-created everlasting harmony; there can be no discord there. It may be some help to us in the contemplation of this mystery to remember that while with us thought must needs be successive, with God it is an eternal Present, an everlasting Now; and that every attribute of His love is always and at all times in perfect exercise and in perfect equilibrium. “The Father loveth the Son:” here

is the infinite appreciation of the infinite beauty of holiness in its innermost shrine of unfathomable bliss. "The Father Himself loveth you :" here is the going forth of Divine love towards man. "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world :" here is the pledge and proof of love. Let this banish for ever every doubt and suspicion from our hearts.

That whosoever believeth in Him.—None are excluded but those who exclude themselves. The love embraces all ; though, alas ! all will not embrace it. The love is universal as the "whosoever ;" the fruition of it is as individual and personal as the "believeth." This faith is the gift of God, the work of the Holy Spirit of God on the spirit of man. And this Holy Spirit is given to all who ask.^a So near is salvation brought.

Should not perish, but have everlasting life.—Who can measure the dread meaning of this word "perish"? Above and beyond all controversies the testimony of Scripture is that *the finally impenitent shall be everlastinglly punished*. Who the finally impenitent are, God only knows. What everlasting punishment is, God only knows. But His Word reveals that it is the loss of heaven and the endurance of the wrath of God in hell. Is it not a strange and inexplicable thing that any who accept the Scriptures, and yet are conscious that they are not at peace with God through Jesus Christ, can be restful, cheerful, mirthful, with such

^a Luke xi. 13; John vii. 37.

a doom hanging over them ? From this believers, though their faith may be as a bruised reed and as smoking flax, are for ever delivered. Yea, they have everlasting life : words of immeasurable bliss : yet they tell of this mortal putting on immortality, of death being swallowed up in victory, of being presented faultless before the throne of God, of the beatific vision, of likeness to Him, of the fruition of His glorious Godhead, of the perfect freedom of His perfect service, of the society of saints and angels, of the many mansions, of the heavenly Jerusalem, of the kingdom that hath no end.

3. *This is a true saying, and worthy, etc.*—The strength of the comfort in these words of St. Paul to Timothy lies in the fact here affirmed, that it was the very design of Christ Jesus in coming into the world *to save sinners*. The stress lies on the last word, sinners. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Here is the hand of Divine mercy stretched out to conscience-stricken souls when first awakened to the sense of sin. The Son of God came into the world for this very end, to save such as themselves. Can they question His willingness ? As the pilot of the lifeboat, who has fought his way through the hungry waves to the side of the stranded wreck, has proved his heart's desire ; it needs not his ringing word of cheer ; it needs not his call to spring on board the saviour boat ; it is enough, he is there. So is there in this very fact

an assurance of success to all who desire salvation. Are they seeking Christ? The Good Shepherd came to seek them first. He knows exactly where they are, how far they have wandered, on what mountains of peril, in what valleys of darkness. They are seeking Him; He is seeking them. The Shepherd will assuredly seek till He finds the wounded sheep, the wayward lamb.

But these words *to save sinners* must not be narrowed to the beginning of the pilgrim's progress; they measure all our way to the Celestial City. The words of the angel to Joseph overshadow, as with a cloud of mercy, all our journey home, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins."^a What countless shortcomings and transgressions of the all-perfect law of love, patient and prayerful self-examination always lights up! Is there not an unutterable relief in the assurance that it was from those very sins which so trouble us, whatever they are—selfishness, worldliness, vanity, pride, covetousness, weakness of purpose, vacillation of will, unbelief, sceptical speculation, presumptuous intrusion into things too high for us—or perhaps temptations to which we have yielded on another side of our mysterious complex life, for each heart knoweth its own bitterness; yet from that sin, whatsoever it may be, which most easily besets us Christ Jesus came to save us? To rescue us from

^a Matt. i. 21.

this especial thraldom was part of the very design of His Advent. Surely as we ponder it, this, which seems at first such an elementary truth, is found to be exceeding broad and exceeding precious, yea, worthy of all acceptation.

4. And now the last of these four comfortable words rises to the climax of consolation. The previous Scripture leads us to the manger of Bethlehem, and the workshop of Nazareth, and the cross of Calvary, and the open sepulchre. This brings us to Olivet, and with His wondering and adoring apostles we track in thought our ascending Lord till by faith we see Him seated at the Father's right hand in glory.

If any man sin, we have an Advocate.—In Him was no sin. He was and is the Lamb without blemish and without spot, the absolutely Sinless One, the altogether Lovely. O divinest Object of contemplation ! who does not pray for a nearer view of that excellent glory ? And yet the filmless splendour of that light reveals our sinfulness, as nothing else can. In His nearer presence we feel and confess with the prophet, Our transgressions are multiplied before Thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us ; and as for our iniquities, we know them.^a And then we consider that, for one failure we know, there are many we know not. And is it true, Thou hast set our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance ?^b We are

^a Isa. lix. 12.

^b Ps. xc. 8.

ashamed, and blush to lift up our face to God. Yet this comfortable word calls us to look up. We have an Advocate with the Father. Here mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace kiss each other. As sinners we are standing at God's tribunal ; but on the throne is the Father of Jesus, His Father and our Father. He is our Advocate pleading for mercy, and yet He is the perfectly righteous One. And this is true, because He is the Propitiation for our sins. His blood speaks peace. With Him the Father is always well pleased. Him the Father heareth always. He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In this assurance we can come to the very footstool of the throne, and look up in the spirit of adoption and cry, Abba, Father. And hence the holy boldness and fervour of the song of adoration which follows. It is the song of the Lord's redeemed, the praise of saints, even of the children of His covenant, a people near unto Him, saying Hallelujah !

"Come unto Me."—MATT. xi. 28, etc.

Come, weary souls, with toil and guilt oppressed,
Come unto Me and I will give you rest.

Come ; God so loved the world He freely gave
His own, His only Son, the world to save.

Come ; for I came from heaven at priceless cost
To seek the wanderer and redeem the lost.

Come then with all your sorrows, sins, and needs
To Me, whose lifeblood with your Father pleads.

E. H. B.

THE HOLY, HOLY, HOLY.

¶ After which the Priest shall proceed, saying,

List up your hearts.

Answer. We list them up unto the Lord.

Priest. Let us give thanks unto our Lord God.

Answer. It is meet and right so to do.

¶ Then shall the Priest turn to the Lord's table, and say,

IT is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times, and in all places, * These words [Holy give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, * Holy Father] must be omitted on Trinity Sunday. Father, Almighty, Everlasting God.

¶ Here shall follow the Proper Preface, according to the time, if there be any specially appointed : or else immediately shall follow,

THEREFORE with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name; evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory : Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High. Amen.

PROPER PREFACES.

Upon *Christmas Day*, and seven days after.

BECAUSE Thou didst give Jesus Christ Thine only Son to be born as at this time for us ; who, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, was made very man of the substance of the Virgin Mary His mother ; and that without spot of sin, to make us clean from all sin. Therefore with angels, etc.

Upon *Easter Day*, and seven days after.

BUT chiefly are we bound to praise Thee for the glorious

resurrection of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord: for He is the very Paschal Lamb, which was offered for us, and hath taken away the sin of the world; who by His death hath destroyed death, and by His rising to life again hath restored to us everlasting life. Therefore with angels, etc.

Upon *Ascension Day*, and seven days after.

THROUGH Thy most dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who after His most glorious Resurrection manifestly appeared to all His apostles, and in their sight ascended up into heaven to prepare a place for us; that where He is, thither we might also ascend, and reign with Him in glory. Therefore with angels, etc.

Upon *Whitsunday*, and six days after.

THROUGH Jesus Christ our Lord; according to whose most true promise, the Holy Ghost came down as at this time from heaven with a sudden great sound, as it had been a mighty wind, in the likeness of fiery tongues, lighting upon the apostles, to teach them, and to lead them to all truth; giving them both the gift of divers languages, and also boldness, with fervent zeal constantly to preach the Gospel unto all nations; whereby we have been brought out of darkness and error into the clear light and true knowledge of Thee, and of Thy Son Jesus Christ. Therefore with angels, etc.

Upon the *Feast of Trinity* only.

WHO art one God, one Lord; not one only Person, but three Persons in one Substance. For that which we believe of the glory of the Father, the same we believe of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, without any difference or inequality. Therefore with angels, etc.

¶ After each of which Prefaces shall immediately be sung or said,
 THEREFORE with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious Name; evermore praising Thee, and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory: Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High. *Amen.*

HERE indeed our service vindicates its name, Eucharist or Thanksgiving. "This part of the Communion office is found almost word for word in every part of the Catholic Church from the earliest times," and many think that it was used in the apostolic age.

In the Liturgies of Basil and Chrysostom (fourth century) it is given in this somewhat lengthened but very beautiful form :—

Priest. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.

Choir. And with thy spirit.

Priest. Let us lift up our hearts.

Choir. We lift them up unto the Lord.

Priest. Let us give thanks to the Lord.

Choir. It is right and just to worship Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, a consubstantial, indivisible Trinity.

Priest. It is right and just to hymn Thee, to bless Thee, to praise Thee, to give thanks unto Thee in every place of Thy dominion. For Thou art God, ineffable, inconceivable, invisible, incomprehensible, immortal, unchangeable, Thou, and Thy only-begotten Son, and Thy Holy Spirit. Thou didst call us into being out of nothing ; and when we fell, didst raise us again, and ceasedst not acting in our behalf, until Thou broughtest us to heaven, and gavest us Thy kingdom in the life to come. For all these things we render thanks to

Thee, and to Thy only-begotten Son, and to Thy Holy Spirit, for all Thy bounties known or unknown, manifest or hidden. We give thanks to Thee also for this holy service, which Thou hast deigned to receive at our hands ; Thou, before whom stand thousands of archangels, ten thousands of angels, cherubim and seraphim of six wings, full of eyes, dwelling on high, swift of flight, who loudly raise in jubilant song their triumphant hymn.

Choir. Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts ; heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Hosanna in the highest, blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

There is surely something very delightful in praising our God in the very same strains, almost the very same words, in which His saints have praised Him from generation to generation for fifteen, perhaps eighteen, centuries. It reminds us that now

“ Like a mighty army moves the Church of God.
Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod.
We are not divided, all one body we,
One in hope and doctrine, one in charity ; ”

and that soon, very soon at the longest, we shall join the ranks who have crossed to the other side of Jordan.

Lift up your hearts (*Sursum corda*). *We lift them up unto the Lord.*—But can this be rightly said by man to his fellow ? and can the answer be so prompt and true ? Who can touch the secret

springs of his own mysterious heart, his own lordly will? It would indeed be both presumptuous and impossible without God's command. But with the words echoing in our ears, "Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto the Lord the glory due unto His Name: O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice," it would be most weak and altogether unworthy of God's servants to shrink from uttering or responding to this Hallelujah call. Be it that our hearts are laggard and our souls cleaving to the dust; nevertheless, if we make the effort in obedience to His command who said to the man with the withered hand, Stretch forth thine hand, the same Omnipotent Lord is with us, and will enable us to rise to the obedience of faith.

Nor can we forget all the preparations of heart which have gone before in this service. When one of those mighty vessels which are the glory of our dockyards is to be launched, every preparation has been made, countless pulleys and ropes and chains, wheels within wheels, and all the machinery balanced in nicest adjustment, so that it needs but the turning of a handle, but the pressure of a woman's finger, for the stupendous fabric weighing many thousand tons to glide quietly and majestically into the bosom of the waters. So here, when the soul is full of grateful trust and love, it needs but the call, "Lift up your hearts," for the quick response,

"We lift them up unto the Lord ;" it needs but the word, "Let us give thanks unto our Lord God," for the reply, "It is meet and right so to do."

And the comfort is unspeakable of lifting up the heart above the cares and conflicts, the toils and troubles, the worldlinesses and wearinesses of life into the very presence of God. It is sweet to come apart and rise from service to communion. Work indeed for such a Master is wages, and service with Him by our side partakes largely of communion. Yet there is a difference, a blessed elevation, when we can be still and contemplate Him, and admire Him, and adore Him. Yes, it is meet and right so to do. This is the utterance of the whole congregation. With one heart and mind all are consenting parties. And now, as having received authority from them to speak in their name to God, the priest, as the rubric directs, turns to the Lord's table^a and says—

It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty.—And is it not the duty of the creature to his Creator, of the child to his Parent, of the blood-sprinkled pardoned sinner to his Redeemer, of one in whom the Holy Spirit dwells to his Sanctifier, thus to pour

^a The priest turns to the Lord's table, not with any superstitious thought of Christ being more present there than elsewhere, but as a sign that, whereas before he was addressing the people, now he is speaking to God. And with regard to any such rubrical directions let us remember the attitudes of worship are observed by God (Ps. cxxxii. 7; Luke xviii. 13). Nothing can be more simple or significant than the postures ordered in our Prayer Book. Let us never add to them. Let us never neglect them.

forth his heart in praise? Yes, to *give thanks at all times and in all places*. These words seem to consecrate the whole world and to bring back the days of heaven upon the earth. From the earliest morning to the latest evening, in the quiet chamber of prayer, in the joy and freedom of the family circle, in the labour of the workshop or the field, in the crowded mart, amid the throngs of men, in the half-hours of recreation, in the calm of the close of day, in the wakeful night, when alone and yet not alone, still, still at all times and in all places it is meet that the soul should rise in thanksgiving to Him to whom it looks up, saying, *O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God*. Here the heart is subdued, and as being subdued is at rest. The words breathe—

“ Under the shadow of Thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure.
Sufficient is Thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure.”

Here verily we are under the shadow of His throne. Our need, our weakness, our fugitive life are brought near to the infinite wealth, the omnipotence, the eternity of the One whom Jesus has taught us to call Holy Father.

Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, etc.*—Thus to join in the

* “ In all the ancient liturgies both of the East and West the saying of the Sanctus is given to the choir and people. The celebrant having recited the preface or introductory part of this great act of Eucharistic thanksgiving, the triumphal

worship of the innumerable company of angels and archangels in their various orders and degrees, those pure, holy, happy intelligences who sang for joy at creation's birth, and have watched the Church's warfare for six thousand years, and have ministered to us as heirs of salvation, thus to unite in the Hallelujahs of the general assembly and Church of the Firstborn, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, seems an anticipation on earth of the songs of glory. The veil seems withdrawn, as in the apocalyptic vision : "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands ; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four living creatures, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying. Amen :

hymn itself is taken up by the whole body of the worshippers, who as kings and priests to God join in that solemn act of adoration of the ever-blessed Trinity" (Annotated Prayer Book). As the most direct act of praise begins with these words, as the last revision of the Prayer Book embraced these and the words which follow in one paragraph, and as the rubric, before the words are repeated after the proper prefaces, says they are to be "*immediately said or sung*," this seems the most suitable place for the whole congregation to unite together in saying or singing this glorious hymn of praise.

Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.”^a And as we draw nigh in trust and love we hear and join in the hymn of the holy cherubim—

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory : Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High.—As the visions of Isaiah and of the beloved apostle in Patmos^b rise before us, the thought is almost overwhelming, that we are worshipping the same Jehovah now. That the heaven of heavens is full of the glory of the Lord, we cannot doubt : it is in harmony with the prayer which Christ has taught us, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. But in what sense are we to understand the words, The earth is full of Thy glory, when the whole creation is groaning and travailing in pain together? Surely here is the triumph of faith. When Hannibal was threatening Rome, some land on which his army was encamped was sold in the Roman Forum, and sold at its full value, for none doubted that the iron courage of the citizens would free the soil of their fatherland. Nor do we doubt the issue of the warfare betwixt light and darkness. The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. He is the Heir of all things. He must reign till He hath put all things under His feet, and then shall God be all in all. And therefore with our whole heart we swell the doxology

^a Rev. vii. 9-12.

^b Isa. vi. and Rev. iv.

of heaven, Glory be to Thee, O Lord most High.

The five Prefaces proper for Christmas, Easter, the Ascension, Whitsuntide, and Trinity Sunday affirm in strong massive language the greater facts of our salvation, viz. the incarnation, the resurrection from death, and the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, the gift of the Holy Ghost, and the Trinity in Unity of the God whom we adore. For solidity of thought and precision of expression they are not surpassed by any theological documents which our Church possesses, and yet they are here interwoven with that celestial hymn which we offer to God in our highest act of adoration. A proof, if proof were needed, that our Church is not afraid of dogmas or settled definitive statements of fundamental truths. Some in the present day shrink from all dogmatic creeds and articles. Their religious faith is wrapped in mists. They love the clear-obscure of doubt and uncertainty, of "the may be and the perhaps," of the "It is possible or probable." Such is not the language of our Church. Clear, distinct, incisive doctrine marks our Prayer Book. Shall we not thank God for it? For no "maybe," no "perhaps," will suffice us when we come to die and are face to face with the realities of eternity; nothing then will content us but the inspired assurance, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed

unto Him."* And further, we learn that a strong grasp and unwavering confession of the great facts of our most holy faith does not hinder, but helps, the utterance of the joy of the believing communicant. The anchor of the soul, that enters within the veil, is sure and steadfast.

"They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy."

—REV. IV. 8.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee ;
Holy, holy, holy ! merciful and mighty,
God in Three Persons, Blessed Trinity.

Holy, holy, holy ! all the saints adore Thee,
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea ;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,
Which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy ! though the darkness hide Thee,
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see,
Only Thou art holy : there is none beside Thee
Perfect in power, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty,
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name in earth, and sky,
and sea :
Holy, holy, holy ! merciful and mighty,
God in Three Persons, Blessed Trinity.

HEBER.

* 2 Tim. i. 12.

THE PRAYER OF HUMBLE ACCESS.

¶ Then shall the Priest, kneeling down at the Lord's table, say in the name of all them that shall receive the Communion this Prayer following.

We do not presume to come to this Thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in Thy manifold and great mercies. We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table. But Thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy : Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink His blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by His body, and our souls washed through His most precious blood, and that we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us. *Amen.*

" As for me, I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy, and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple." Such was the childlike confidence, and such the holy awe, in the man after God's own heart, as he drew near to the throne of grace. And such is the spirit of this collect, which has been well called "The prayer of humble access" in our Communion Service.

It immediately follows that hymn of lofty praise in which, with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify the Name of God. Is there any want of harmony between

that celestial adoration and this profound confession, We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table? There is contrast, but no discord. The noblest trees of the forest, which catch the first golden lights of the morning and the latest rose-tints of the evening, strike their roots the deepest into the soil. The little lark which soars with daring wing into the blue sky, and floods the sunny air with music, returns to its nest on the bosom of the earth,

"True to the kindred points of heaven and home."

So is it with the soul that is born of God and taught of God.

We have confessed our sins, we have heard the voice of God's absolution, we have welcomed to our hearts the comfortable words of Gospel assurance, we have lifted up our souls to our Father in heaven; but now we are about to come to the Lord's own table, to sup with Him, and He is about to sup with us. In what attitude of spirit shall we come? Surely, as pardoned sinners, we can only draw near in lowliest humiliation. So far from this being a discordant tone, any other would be out of harmony with the deepest and truest feelings of our soul.

We first renounce every fragment of trust in our own righteousness. However fair our conduct may have been before men, we know and we acknowledge with the prophet that before God we

are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.^a No words could say more, and we would not say less. For if there were ever so small a portion of the wedding garment, which was our own goodness, all our anxiety and solicitude would be to cleanse and mend it ; and all would be in vain. But we renounce *all*.

" Nothing in my hand I bring ;
Simply to Thy cross I cling ;
Naked, come to Thee for dress ;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace ;
Foul I to the fountain fly ;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die."

But while we thus forego all confidence in ourselves, we cast ourselves upon God's manifold and great mercies. They are as manifold, as they are great ; as diversified, as they are vast. So the contrite Psalmist prayed, " Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness : according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions."^b According to the multitude of Thy tender mercies—not one act of mercy only, but mercies ; not mercies alone, but tender mercies ; not only a few tender mercies, but the multitude of Thy tender mercies. Our God delights in mercy ; He is plenteous in mercy ; His mercy is everlasting. The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, upon them that hope in His mercy.^c His eye is upon them, not in wrath, we may be

^a Isa. lxiv. 6.

^b Ps. li. 1.

^c Ps. xxxiii. 18.

assured ; but if we need more, we have the Holy Spirit's exposition of the words in a later psalm, "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy."^a It is like a father saying to himself regarding his child, "I will keep an eye upon the little lamb." Here the most anxious heart may rest and be still.

But once more we confess, *We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under Thy table.* —In this there is perhaps an intertwining of three Scripture thoughts : the words of Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant ;"^b the words of the prodigal to his father, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son ;"^c and the words of the Syro-Phenician woman when Jesus said to her, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs," and she replied, "Truth, Lord : yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."^d And as to any claim of merit, we would fain take even a lower place than this, and confess that we are not worthy to gather up the crumbs under the table of this heavenly feast of love.

From this utter self-renunciation, yea, because of it, we cling to Him who changes not, the same Lord whose property is always to have mercy. His royal prerogative of grace is our refuge. And

^a Ps. cxlvii. 11.

^c Luke xv. 21.

^b Gen. xxxii. 10.

^d Matt. xv. 26, 27.

it is no mere forgiveness we now proceed to ask, no simple act of reconciliation (this has been assured to us before in the absolution and in the four Comfortable Words); but we plead for gifts of love, greater than which the human heart cannot conceive. We make requests, which the blessed angels themselves cannot prefer. We ask for the very closest communion possible between God and man. We pray that we may eat the flesh and drink the blood of His dear Son. The reference is evidently to the words of our Lord, "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven : if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. . . . Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life. . . . For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed ;"^a words which affirm not only the necessity of the death of the Incarnate Son of God, but also that every one, who would live for ever, must personally take and eat and drink of this heavenly sustenance, so that the most intimate union of spirit with spirit, even as the natural food is incorporated with the natural body, takes place betwixt the believer and Christ. This is the work of the Holy Ghost in the heart of those, who behold with appropriating faith the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. And of this heavenly union the bread and

^a John vi. 51-55.

wine are lively and efficient signs and tokens and pledges to those who believe. While they obey their Saviour's command, This do in remembrance of Me, God works invisibly in them.

We pray that we may so eat and so drink, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by the body of our Lord, and our souls washed through His most precious blood. We come through the rent veil of His flesh, His spotless humanity ; and His blood washes our spirits white. Though in ourselves most sinful and unworthy, yet as sprinkled with the blood of Jesus there is no spot of guilt remaining in us, body or soul, for that blood cleanses from all sin.

Thus, and thus only, can we prefer the closing petitions of this inexpressibly solemn prayer, *that we may evermore dwell in Him, and He in us*: we dwelling in Christ as in a palace home, replete with everything of excellence and beauty and glory, everything for rest and refreshment, everything for meditative study ; and Christ dwelling in us as in a lowly cottage home, which He adorns and beautifies with His presence; filling it with light and love, and peace and praise, which He purifies by His Spirit, and which He destines to be His residence for ever. Such is our blessed privilege in the everlasting covenant of the Gospel of the grace of God—free access through the blood of Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost to the very footstool of our Father's throne.

"*This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*"
—LUKE xv. 2.

Not worthy, Lord, to gather up the crumbs
With trembling hand that from Thy table fall,
A weary heavy-laden sinner comes
To plead Thy promise and obey Thy call.

I am not worthy to be thought Thy child,
Nor sit the last and lowest at Thy board ;
Too long a wanderer, and too oft beguiled,—
I only ask one reconciling word.

One word from Thee, my Lord, one smile, one look,
And I could face the cold rough world again ;
And with that treasure in my heart could brook
The wrath of devils and the scorn of men.

And is not mercy Thy prerogative :
Free mercy—boundless, fathomless, divine ?
Me, Lord, the chief of sinners, me forgive !
And Thine the greater glory, only Thine.

I hear Thy voice : Thou bidst me come and rest.
I come, I kneel, I clasp Thy pierced feet ;
Thou bidst me take my place—a welcome guest
Among Thy saints, and of Thy banquet eat.

My praise can only breathe itself in prayer,
My prayer can only lose itself in Thee :
Dwell Thou for ever in my heart, and there,
Lord, let me sup with Thee : sup Thou with me.

E. H. B.

THE PRAYER OF CONSECRATION.

¶ When the Priest, standing before the table, hath so ordered the bread and wine, that he may with the more readiness and decency break the bread before the people, and take the cup into his hands, he shall say the Prayer of Consecration, as followeth.

ALMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, who of Thy tender mercy didst give Thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption; who made there (by His one oblation of Himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world; and did institute, and in His holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that His precious death, until His coming again; Hear us, O merciful Father, we most humbly beseech Thee; and grant that we receiving these Thy creatures of bread and wine, according to Thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of His death and passion, may be partakers of His most blessed body and blood: who, in the same night that He was betrayed, * took bread; and, when He had given thanks, † He brake it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, Take, eat, ‡ this is My body which is given for you: Do this in remembrance of Me. Likewise after supper He § took the cup; and, when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this; for this || is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins: Do this, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of Me. Amen.

* Here the Priest is to take the paten into his hands:

† And here to break the bread:

‡ And here to lay his hand upon all the bread:

§ Here he is to take the cup into his hand:

|| And here to lay his hand upon every vessel (be it chalice or flagon) in which there is any wine to be consecrated.

WE come now to the Prayer of Consecration, that is, making sacred, or setting apart the bread and wine from common use and dedicating them to God, that we may reverently partake of them as outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual mysteries of grace. As in the form of prayer for consecrating a church the Bishop prays, "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to be now present with us who are here gathered together to consecrate this place with all humility and readiness of heart to the honour of Thy great Name, separating it henceforth from all unhallowed, ordinary, and common uses, and dedicating it entirely to Thy service,"—so in this prayer the priest consecrates the bread and wine to be symbols of the body and blood of Christ.

The prayer begins by tracing the atoning sacrifice of the death of Christ upon the cross to the tender mercy of God our heavenly Father. It thus condemns in the strongest way possible that perversion of the truth, which would represent the Eternal Father as less merciful than the Eternal Son, by affirming that the stream of redeeming grace flowed from the well-spring of the Father's love. This is based on a hundred Scriptures,^a and is essential to a strong and childlike faith in God.

The prayer proceeds to declare that Jesus Christ upon that cross made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for sin. The

^a For example, John iii. 16; x. 17, 18; Rom. v. 8; viii. 32; Titus ii. 11; iii. 4.

death of Christ was no mere example of self-surrender ; it was this indeed, a supreme example of self-surrender by One who had illimitable riches of glory to give up ; but it was far more. The death of Christ was no mere martyrdom in witness of the truth which He proclaimed, sealing it with His blood ; it was this likewise ; but it was far more. It was the one all-perfect sacrifice for sins, by which our great High Priest in offering up Himself fulfilled all the typical offerings of the law. Jesus Christ crucified is the propitiation for our sins. By His death He redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification ; therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the weighty words of Richard Hooker, "Christ hath merited righteousness for as many as are found in Him. In Him God findeth us, if we be faithful ; for by faith we are incorporated into Him. Then although in ourselves we be altogether sinful and unrighteous, yet even the man which in himself is impious, full of iniquity, full of sin ; him being found in Christ through faith, and having his sin in hatred through repentance ; him God beholdeth with a gracious eye, putteth away his sin by not imputing it, taketh quite away the punishment due thereunto by pardoning it ; and accepteth him in Jesus Christ as perfectly righteous, as if he had

fulfilled all that is commanded him in the law ; shall I say more perfectly righteous than if himself had fulfilled the whole law ? I must take heed what I say ; but the apostle saith, God made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.^a Such we are in the sight of God the Father as is the very Son of God Himself. Let it be accounted folly, or frenzy, or fury, or whatsoever. It is our wisdom and our comfort ; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned and God hath suffered ; that God hath made Himself the sin of men, and that men are made the righteousness of God.”^b

Again, the opening sentences of this consecration prayer affirm, that the One Sacrifice for sin was offered once for all. This is built on the most certain warrant of those Scriptures, which declare that Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ; and that, in contrast to the Jewish priests who stood daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which could never take away sins, this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God.^c This condemns any repetition of that which is perfect and complete, according to the 31st article of our Church, entitled *Of the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross* : “The

^a 2 Cor. v. 21.

^b Hooker, vol. ii. p. 606.

^c Heb. ix. 28 and x. 12.

offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world both original and actual, and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of masses, in the which it was commonly said that the priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits."

Furthermore, in harmony with this article, the consecration prayer teaches that the offering of Christ was for the sins of the whole world. It thus condemns the unscriptural doctrine of a redemption limited to God's elect, and declares unhesitatingly that which the Word of God declares, that Jesus Christ tasted death for every man, and that He is the propitiation not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world.^a The Atonement is as wide as the ruin of the Fall. All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.^b Who shall dare to interpret the "all" with which this verse closes differently from the "all" with which it commences ? The sin is world-wide, and so is the redemption. The Master bought with His precious life-blood even those who deny Him, and who are bringing on themselves swift destruction.^c Yes, this is the condemnation

^a Heb. ii. 9; 1 John ii. 2.

^b Isa. liii. 6.

^c 2 Peter ii. 1.

of the lost, that they thrust away from them the cup of salvation which the Redeemer puts to their lips.

And now we are reminded that Jesus Christ "did institute, and in His holy Gospel command us to continue, a perpetual memory of that His precious death until His coming again." This chord of remembrance is struck again and again in our service. In the Invitation it is said, "The most comfortable Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ is to be received by us in remembrance of His meritorious Cross and Passion." In the Exhortation we have heard, "To the end that we should alway remember the exceeding great love of our Master and only Saviour, Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, and the innumerable benefits which by His precious blood-shedding He hath obtained to us ; He hath instituted and ordained holy mysteries, as pledges of His love, and for a continual remembrance of His death, to our great and endless comfort." And so when we receive the bread and wine we are invited to take and eat and drink in remembrance that Christ died for us, in remembrance that His blood was shed for us. The Passover feast was ordained to Israel for a memorial, so that when they entered on possession of the Promised Land, and their children asked them, What mean ye by this service ? the memory of their great deliverance might be preserved from generation to generation. So is it with the Lord's Supper. It has been a silent witness

from age to age in every land, wherever Christianity has been planted, that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified on Calvary. "Imagine some one a perfect stranger to Christianity, knowing nothing of its facts or doctrines, introduced into one of our Christian churches at the time of the administration of the Lord's Supper. He observes what goes forward; group after group of worshippers drawing nigh to the holy table, and partaking at the hands of the officiating minister of bread and wine. Suppose him to ask the meaning of this ceremony. Could any account be given in explanation which would not connect this solemn service with the death of our Lord? The stranger must be told, The Saviour in whom these Christians trust died upon the cross more than eighteen centuries ago. The night before He suffered He appointed this observance; He charged His disciples to practise this rite, and to hand it down to their successors from age to age. And thus it comes to pass that Christians, all the world over, have ever done this in remembrance of their Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, and in obedience to His dying command."^a

It is to this lively exhibition of the death of Christ that St. Paul, at least inclusively, seems to refer when he expostulates with the Galatians, saying, "Before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently

^a From a paper on the Lord's Supper (*Evening Hours, 1871*) by the Bishop of Ripon.

set forth crucified among you."^a On which Scripture Thomas Scott comments : " All things relating to the sufferings of Christ, the need, motive, intenseness, and benefit of them, had been set before them in so distinct, pathetic, affecting, and lively a manner by the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Lord's Supper, that Jesus Christ had, as it were, been evidently set forth as crucified before their eyes, and in the midst of them." And we make the memorial before God as well as before men (observe, the act of consecration is part of a prayer addressed to God), and thus we plead before our Father in heaven the One all-perfect Sacrifice made on Calvary, as our only plea for pardon and acceptance and life. And this we do until His coming again. As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, says St. Paul, ye do show the Lord's death till He come.^b Nor was it reserved for the inspired apostle to put this meaning into the acts ; for the Master Himself had said, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.^c And these words fall into the deep and strong current of other Scriptures,^d till the prophecy of the heavenly feast is crowned by the apocalyptic benediction, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the

^a Gal. iii. 1.^b 1 Cor. xi. 26.^c Matt. xxvi. 29.^d Matt. viii. 11; Luke xii. 37; xxii. 29, 30.

Lamb.* So truly has one said, "The Lord's Supper is like a pillar set up amid the waste of centuries, which bids defiance to the ravages of time, and has inscribed upon it on the one side Gethsemane and Calvary, and on the other side the glories of the Second Advent, and the songs of the redeemed as they enter in triumph the New Jerusalem."

But the Lord's Supper is more than a commemoration of the past. It is no bare act of memory. The remembrance of the death and passion of our absent Lord, who in His glorified humanity has ascended to God's right hand, is one very important part of the holy Communion. But there is another part which is, if possible, more important still, the feeding by faith upon a present Lord, present in the hearts of His people. And so we proceed to pray, "Hear us, O merciful Father, we most humbly beseech Thee; and grant that we receiving these Thy creatures of bread and wine, according to Thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy institution, in remembrance of His death and passion, may be partakers of His most blessed body and blood." This is the truth expressed in the 28th Article, "That to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the Supper of the Lord, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ, and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ."

This holy feast, then, is both a commemoration

* Rev. xix. 9.

of an absent Lord and a participation by faith in a present Lord. The absence of Christ and the presence of Christ are both facts. He is absent.^a Him the heavens have received till the times of the restitution of all things. In His risen and glorified humanity He is not here; He has ascended to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God. But yet His words are eternally true, Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them. Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.^b In His omnipresent Deity He is here; and He dwells in the hearts of His people, so that in every act of faithful devotion, and especially in His own appointed feast of love, He sups with them, and they with Him.^c

Is it not the want of realizing one or other of these two facts, the absence and the presence of Jesus, that has so grievously obscured the significance of this heavenly feast? Some forget the fact of His presence, and they turn this holy Supper into a mere commemoration of His dying love. Others forget the fact of His absence; and investing the bread and wine with a half-spiritual half-material mystery, speak of the elements as if the Lord were

^a John xiv. 2; xvi. 7.

^b Matt. xviii. 20; xxviii. 20; John xiv. 23. ^c Rev. iii. 20.

locally present in or with them, thus incurring the gravest danger of idolatry, and losing hold of the truth that herein we show forth the Lord's death till He come. Now both facts, His absence and His presence, are equally true, and true at one and the same time. Both are affirmed in holy Scripture. Both are set forth in our Communion Service. Let us hold both fast, that our joy may be full.

How it pleases God invisibly by His Spirit to work in us and nourish our souls with Christ's body and blood, while we eat the bread and drink the wine, we know not. But our ignorance of the way in which God works, ought not for a moment to make us doubt the reality. We do not know the way in which He works in our hearts by His Spirit, when we are studying His holy Word or praying at the footstool of His throne. It is enough for us, that the grace given according to His promise is a blessed reality. So in the Lord's Supper we believe, and the fact is realized in us. We do spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood; we do dwell in Christ, and Christ in us; we are one with Christ, and Christ with us. Our souls are strengthened and refreshed by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine. His body and blood are verily and indeed taken by the faithful in the Lord's Supper, as the apostle bears witness when he says, The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion

of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ.^a

And thus in the simple obedience of faith we proceed to obey our Master's command, "This do in remembrance of Me." The institution of the Lord's Supper is recorded, and the acts are rehearsed in our hearing and before our eyes. "*This do in remembrance of Me*, that is, all that was done then. Bless the bread, break it, distribute it, eat it. When I am no longer with you these acts will make memory grow into realization of My presence in your midst. If the soft music of those words could reach us now, disentangled from the theological discords of intervening ages, surely they would come to us with some such significance. To those who first heard them they certainly must have implied, not that a physical presence was about to be perpetuated, but rather that there was now something for them which would in after ages console them for a physical absence."^b So in like manner is the wine poured forth, telling of His blood shed for the remission of sins. But His bodily absence only makes His spiritual presence in our hearts more precious and real to faith; for now the Beloved has brought us to His banqueting-house, and His banner over us is Love.

^a 1 Cor. x. 16.

^b Ellicott's Commentary : 1 Cor. xi. 24, by T. Teignmouth Shore.

*"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion
of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it
not the communion of the body of Christ?" — I COR. X. 16.*

Come, take by faith the body of your Lord,
And drink the holy blood for you outpoured.

Saved by His body, hallowed by His blood,
With souls refreshed we render thanks to God.

Salvation's Giver, Christ, the only Son,
By His dear cross and blood the victory won.

Offered was He for greatest and for least,
Himself the Victim and Himself the Priest.

Victims were offered by the law of old,
Which in a type celestial mysteries told.

He, Ransomer from death, and Light from shade,
Now gives His holy grace His saints to aid.

Approach ye then with faithful hearts sincere,
And take the pledges of salvation here.

He, that in this world rules His saints, and shields,
To all believers life eternal yields;

With heavenly bread makes them that nunger whole,
Gives living waters to the thirsting soul.

O Judge of all, our only Saviour Thou,
In this Thy feast of love be with us now.

Tr. NEALE.

THE RECEIVING OF THE HOLY COMMUNION WITH MEDITATIONS ON CHRIST..

¶ Then shall the Minister first receive the Communion in both kinds himself, and then proceed to deliver the same to the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons in like manner (if any be present), and after that to the people also in order, into their hands, all meekly kneeling. And, when he delivereth the bread to any one, he shall say,

THE body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving.

¶ And the Minister that delivereth the cup to any one shall say,

THE blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee, and be thankful.

¶ If the consecrated bread or wine be all spent before all have communicated, the Priest is to consecrate more according to the form before prescribed ; beginning at [Our Saviour Christ in the same night, etc.,] for the blessing of the bread ; and at [Likewise after Supper, etc.,] for the blessing of the cup.

WE come now to the actual participation in the Supper of the Lord. In some Christian assemblies they have what is called "the fencing of the tables," in the form of solemn admonitions addressed to those about to communicate. Who

does not feel in our Communion Office how watchfully and jealously the holy table is fenced by all that has gone before? We have come to the throne of grace with the words upon our lips, which Christ Himself has taught us. We have prayed God to cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of His Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Him. We have searched our hearts and lives by the light of His perfect law, and have besought after every commandment pardon for the past, and power for the time to come. We have listened in the Epistles and Gospels to the words of the apostles of Jesus, yea, to the words of the Master Himself. We have solemnly affirmed the noblest creed of Christendom. We have listened to some Gospel message from those, whose highest glory it is to be the ambassadors of Christ. We have prayed to God for the whole Church militant here on earth, and blessed His holy Name for the Church triumphant in heaven. We have cast our gifts into God's treasury in token that all we are and have is His. We have listened to the searching exhortation addressed to those who mind to come to the holy Communion of the body and blood of Christ. We have confessed our sins in terms of the lowliest self-humiliation. We have heard God's voice of absolution. We have rested ourselves on some of the choicest and most comfortable words of the covenant of grace. We have risen to the loftiest notes of adoration,

even joining our feeble praises with the songs of the Cherubim and Seraphim before the throne. We have fallen upon our knees confessing ourselves not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under our Master's table. And now we have witnessed the scene of the Last Supper rehearsed before our eyes, the bread broken and the wine poured out as at the first institution of this holy feast. None can have thoughtfully and prayerfully followed this service without realizing that we are herein drawing near, very near, to God.

And now the minister first receives the Communion in both kinds himself, and then delivers it to the clergy and people, saying, "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee; the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on Him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee, and be thankful."

We observe in these words again^a the commemoration of an absent Lord and the participation by faith in a present Lord. We also observe that no less than four times in these few sentences ("The body which was given *for thee*. The blood which was shed *for thee*. Christ died *for thee*. Christ's blood was shed *for thee*") is the atoning sacrifice of

^a See last chapter, pp. 174-176.

Christ's death for us brought home to each communicant individually and personally. It is very blessed to behold, at John Baptist's invitation, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world ; and to listen with Nicodemus to the great charter of salvation, that God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son ; and to believe the mysterious words, The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world ;^a and for a while the soul may well be lost in the contemplation of the world-wide redemption of Calvary. But ere long we need something nearer and closer. Each one is constrained to say, Sin has entered my heart, Satan tempts me, I am fallen and guilty and exposed to wrath. And then what needful and strong consolation there is in the assurance, that in dying for all Christ tasted death for every man. Everlasting life is purchased for all and offered to all ; faith grasps it, and says with the apostle, The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me.^b

Yes, as we receive the bread and wine, we hear the heavenly music of the words, The body and blood of Christ preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. *Body and soul*, that inestimably precious complex being, which is to each one "I," "I myself," made in the image of God to glorify and enjoy Him for ever. Surely it might make angels weep to see how lightly many cast this

^a John i. 29; iii. 16; vi. 51.

^b Gal. ii. 20.

priceless self away for the pleasures of sin, which are but for a moment, for those riches which make to themselves wings and fly away, for the fugitive favour of the world, just as if the Incarnate Truth had never said, What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose himself, or be cast away? But those who have fled for refuge to Jesus Christ can say, I know whom I have believed. Their life is hid with Christ in God. Of this the bread and wine are pledges and seals assuring them on Christ's authority that His body and blood will preserve them unto everlasting life, safe through all the snares and storms of the world, safe through the dissolution of death if the Lord call us before He comes for us, safe in the morning of the resurrection, safe before the judgment-throne, safe for all the ages of eternity.

It is in this faith we take and eat the bread. It is in this faith we drink the wine. These outward and visible acts when the minister delivers the bread and the cup, and we put forth the hand and take them, and eat the bread and drink the wine, are a very real help to a spiritual understanding of our acceptance of Christ. As the bread and wine are offered to us, so Jesus Christ offers Himself to us for our soul's sustenance and refreshment. As we put forth the hand and take these emblems of His dying love, so we close with Christ's offer of Himself. As we eat the bread and drink the wine, so we feed on Christ in our hearts. We actually take

and eat the bread : we actually take the cup and drink the wine. And so we actually with all our heart, and mind, and soul, and strength accept Jesus Christ as our only and perfect Saviour. The one fact, which is outward and visible, helps us to grasp the other fact, which is inward and spiritual. The outward fact is unquestionable, so is the inward fact unquestionable. The outward fact is real, so is the inward fact real. Faith is the evidence of things not seen.

And now are the Lord's words fulfilled to every faithful communicant in the innermost temple of his soul, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock : if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."^a He sups with us, and we with Him. Here only is perfect rest. For the human soul was made for Christ, by whom and for whom were all things created. Just as truly as the vine-branch answers to the parent stem, in which abiding it lives, from which severed it dies, pith answering to pith, wood to wood, skin to skin, bark to bark, so does the believer live in Christ. Only let us hear His voice, admit Him to our heart of hearts, make Him an honoured guest there, drink into His Spirit. In Him there is light for our intellect, peace for our conscience, reason to convince our judgment, motive to impel our will, and a whole heaven of love for our heart. He will sup with us,

^a Rev. iii. 20.

tenderly inquiring our needs, our fears, our weaknesses and wants, and finding His joy in supplying our necessities. And we shall sup with Him; for He will open out to us the inexhaustible treasures of His grace, never so well content as when we make the largest demands on His bounty. Hence the peculiar sweetness of these words, "I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me," in times of affliction and bereavement. When we cannot bear the society of other friends, for the wound bleeds afresh at their softest touch, we can bear the presence of Jesus. He is with us, and those we love are with Him.

Who can refuse to echo the closing words, *with thanksgiving, be thankful?* Not the blessed guest who sups with Jesus. For the heart responds to His love—

" 'Tis Thine each soul to calm,
Each wayward thought reclaim,
And make our life a daily psalm
Of glory to Thy Name."

COMMUNINGS OF JESUS WITH THE SOUL.

We can hardly forbear gazing back with a strange desire on the time before the Fall, when the Lord God walked and talked with our first parents in Eden, and they were not afraid. There was no sin, no shame, no fear. The Creator looked upon all that He had created and made;

and, behold, it was very good. And man looked up into his Creator's face, and drank in the beams of His love.

But though those days have passed from the earth till the times of the restitution of all things, it is most blessed to see how near God permits His sinful fallen children to approach to Him in the covenant of His grace. Abraham was called the friend of God. Jacob wrestled with God all night long till break of day. Unto Moses the Lord spoke face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend. David, the man after God's own heart, saw His power and glory in the sanctuary. And time would fail to tell of Elijah, and Isaiah, and Daniel, and many others who, even in the dimmer light of the Old Covenant, drew near to God. And now the veil is rent ; now our High Priest has entered into the Holiest to appear in the presence of God for us ; now He has shed forth His Spirit ; now we all with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are being changed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord ; surely we may humbly pray for and expect a yet closer, clearer, and more transporting and transforming view of God in Christ to whom the Master says, He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.^a And are such blessed manifestations of Jesus to His own ever vouchsafed now ?

^a John xiv. 21.

May we not anticipate them when, in obedience to His own command, we draw near to His table, and drink of that cup of blessing, which is the communion of the blood of Christ, and eat of that bread, which is the communion of the body of Christ?

There will always be some intervals, either before or after we ourselves draw nigh to the holy table, for quiet thought and prayer. How shall we use them to the utmost advantage? Life is so precious; its days are so rapid, and apparently more rapid with advancing years; its hours for calm meditation are so fleeting, and to some so few and far between, that at the Lord's Supper, when our whole soul has been stirred to a more strenuous effort to realize things unseen and eternal, we instinctively long to make the most of those golden minutes or half-hours of rest with Jesus on our pilgrimage.

Yes, we are with Jesus, and Jesus is with us. Surely, then, direct converse with the Master Himself will be the most helpful, the most fruitful, of all exercises of thought. My meditation of Him, says the Psalmist, shall be sweet;^a not of His works, though they are great, and sought out of all who have pleasure therein; not of His kingdom, though it is glorious and everlasting; not of His people, though He rests in His love upon them, and bids us love one another even as He loves us; but of Him, the Lord of life and love Himself.

^a Ps. civ. 34.

I would venture, then, to suggest a few breathings of communion betwixt the soul and Christ in some of those manifold aspects in which Scripture brings Him before us—as the Shepherd and Host, as the Lamb of God, as the High Priest, as the Good Physician, as the Counsellor, as the Brother born for adversity, as the Prophet, as the smitten Rock of Ages from whence flow all the graces of the Holy Spirit, as our Advocate with the Father, who ever liveth to make intercession for us, as our Forerunner, as the Bridegroom of His Church, as the King of glory upon whose head are many crowns.

I would ask you, kind reader, to imagine yourself in the immediate presence of your Lord. His nearness will serve as a veil to shut out distracting thoughts. Your brethren and sisters in Christ are by your side, and this will give you the sweet sense of the communion of saints. But the presence of Jesus overshadows every other thought; it fills your soul, till you feel, Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee.^a

I. *Jesus as our Shepherd and Host.*

You have just received, or are just about to receive, the sacramental tokens of His body and blood. He has given Himself to you. You are

^a Ps. lxxiii. 25.

giving yourself to Him. You are probably kneeling at His feet. Well, open your Bible and read, or silently repeat in your heart, the twenty-third Psalm, and regard Him for a little space as the Good Shepherd and Gracious Host of His people.

"The Lord is my Shepherd ; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures : He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul : He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me ; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies : thou anointest my head with oil ; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

If the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart (and He will speak to you if you ask His heavenly assistance), the familiar words of this psalm will come home to you with a blessed force and meaning ; and, it may be, that as you listen the Master will speak to you in some such accents as these :—

"My child, I am thy Shepherd. I gave My life for thee. Thou canst never forget how first I sought thee, when thou wast wandering far from Me. I sought thee, till I found thee. Thy fleece was torn and defiled, but I washed thee white in My blood. Thou wast weary and wounded, but

I bound up thy wounds with the balm of My love and healed thee. I brought thee to My fold. And now thou art Mine, and I am thine : thou shalt never want. I have already revealed to thee something of My goodness. I have far more ir. store for. thee. Only follow Me closely and lovingly, and I will lead thee in the pastures of tender grass and by the waters of quietness. It is true that too often, since first I had mercy on thee, thou hast been wayward and backward. But now I am restoring thy soul, and am waiting to lead thee in the happy paths of righteousness for My Name's sake. Hours of darkness and of peril may be before thee, and one day thou wilt be called to walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Leave all thy future to Me. I will never forsake thee till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. Having loved thee, I will love thee to the end. Of which let this broken bread and poured-out wine be token and pledge. My flesh is meat indeed : My blood is drink indeed. My life is the life of thy soul : My love is better than wine. I am not only thy Shepherd, but also thy Host. Thou art My guest. See, I pour the fragrant oil of My Spirit upon thy head. Let thy home be filled with the odour of the ointment. I crown thy cup with lovingkindness and tender mercies ; it overflows with My love. Open thy heart wide ; yes, wider and wider still. Thou wilt never exhaust My bounty. Nor fear what the un-

known years before thee shall bring forth ; for goodness and mercy, like guardian angels commissioned to watch over thee, shall follow thee all the days of thy pilgrim life ; and when thy travelling days on earth are over, thou shalt dwell in the many mansions of My Father's house for ever."

Possibly such communings of Christ with the soul over this short psalm may fill up all the quiet intervals of our Communion season ; but if more time remains, or at another Communion, you may regard

II. *Jesus as the Lamb of God.*

Read, or repeat to yourself, the whole, or portions, of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah.

"He is despised and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief : and we hid as it were our faces from Him ; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon Him ; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth : He is brought as

a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment : and who shall declare His generation ? for He was cut off out of the land of the living : for the transgression of My people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death ; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him ; He hath put Him to grief : when thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied : by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many ; for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong ; because He hath poured out His soul unto death : and He was numbered with the transgressors ; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”^a

If the Holy Spirit breathes over these words, a gracious tenderness will pervade your soul. Perhaps your eyes will be filled with tears : certainly your heart will be filled with love ; and you will say again and again, “ O Master, what ! all this for me ? ”

And He will answer, “ Yes, My child, I loved

^a Isa. liii. 3-12.

thee even to the bitter cross. I knew all that was before Me when I said to My Father for thy sake, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not : lo, I come, I delight to do Thy will, O My God. I knew what the poverty was to which I stooped, when I who was rich for thy sake became poor. I knew on that dread night what the agony before Me was, when I prayed, If this cup may not pass from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done. My child, I drank it to the very dregs for thee. I drank that cup of suffering and death, that I might put the cup of salvation and life into thy hands. Yes, My child, I was wounded for thy transgressions ; I was bruised for thy iniquities ; I tasted death for thee. Thy sins before I called thee to Myself, thy sins since thou hast known Me, thy wanderings and wilfulnesses, thy unbeliefs and backslidings, nailed Me to the cross. My soul was made an offering for thy sin. But I see in thee of the travail of My soul, and am satisfied. It is enough that thou trustest Me, carest for Me, lovest Me, and servest, at least desirest to serve, Me. It is enough that the Comforter is tracing in thee the lineaments of My likeness. It is enough : through all the ages to come I shall hear thy voice amid the choirs of the redeemed singing, Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood—to Him be glory. Yes, the crystal joys of heaven shall flow forth to thee for ever from the throne of God and of the Lamb."

III. *Jesus as the High Priest.*

Another time, perhaps when the voices from Sinai have seemed more true and terrible than ever, you remember, “The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart: neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”^a Your very soul shrinks from the pure white light; and you mourn with Moses the man of God who said, Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance.^b But you read on, or the Spirit of God brings them to your remembrance, the verses that follow in the Epistle to the Hebrews: “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”^c

At the music of these words a holy calm steals

^a Heb. iv. 12, 13. ^b Ps. xc. 8. ^c Heb. iv. 14-16.

over your spirit ; and the eye of faith seems to discern Jesus, your High Priest, beside the heavenly mercy-seat, and the ear of faith to hear the sound of the golden bells upon the fringe of His robe, till He speaks to you and says :—

“ My child, be not afraid. I have said to thee, Thy sins, which are many, are forgiven thee. All is well betwixt God and thy soul. I have entered into the Holiest with My own blood, as thy Surety and Mediator. My offering was finished on Calvary. My Father accepts Me always, and thou art accepted in Me. The incense of My merits perpetually ascends in His presence and pleads victoriously for thee. Thy name is on My breastplate ; it is graven on My heart as with the diamond pen of love. Be of good cheer : I have undertaken for thee. There is mercy for all the past ; and there is grace for timely succour in all that lies before thee. My Father loves thee, even as I love ; and He has charged Me, as a Son over My own house, to prepare a place for thee, wherein thou shalt abide for ever and fulfil for ever the ministries of the royal priesthood of heaven.”

IV. Jesus as the Good Physician.

It may be we are coming very sin-weary and wayworn to the Lord’s Table. He invites such to come. He receiveth sinners and eateth with them. We have indeed confessed all our guilt to

Him, and He has spoken to us the great word of absolution, I, even I, have blotted out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.^a Nevertheless, there is a sense of feebleness, a loss of tone. We are anxious and depressed. But our eye lights on, or our heart instinctively turns to, a Scripture which more than any other seems to meet our case—

“Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?”^b

We quietly for a few moments think of Jesus in this character, and we remember His words, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.^c Ah, now we feel we are with One who understands us,

“One who can love us though He reads us true.”

There is no reserve now. We open all our griefs to Him. We tell Him, so far as we know, exactly where it was that we began to fail. We confide to Him all our disappointed hopes and broken resolves in the past, all our fears and misgivings for the future. We put our case wholly in His hands. And He speaks to us:—

“My child, I am thy Physician who have watched thy life to Godward from the birthday of thy soul until now. I know all thy weaknesses and diseases. I know their symptoms and the root from which they

^a Isa. xliii. 25.

^b Jer. viii. 22.

^c Matt. ix. 12.

spring. I have taken note of all. But before I talk with thee of these things, let Me speak of thy loving labours for My sake and the Gospel's. Do not think, that thy failures of service have hidden from Me thy efforts to please Me. I know thy works and thy labour and thy patience, and how for My Name's sake thou hast laboured and hast not fainted. I have seen thee faint yet pursuing. I do not forget how thou hast taken of thy choicest and costliest, and laid it cheerfully at My feet, and hast thought it all too little to do for the Lord who bought thee. Thou hast not grudged to give Me that which lay nearest to thy heart, thy dearest of home treasures, for My service. I have often watched thee pondering, Is it for the Master? and when convinced that it was, willingly giving time and toil and talents that nothing else would have persuaded thee to give. I have not forgotten thy love to My poor, thy kindnesses to My house, thy sacrifices for the ambassadors of My cross among the heathen. And when I have needed thy beloved ones to be with Me, where I am, to behold My glory and to serve Me within the veil, thou hast tried to surrender them not grudgingly or of necessity, but echoing My own words, 'Father, not my will, but Thine, be done.' O My child, these things are written in the book of My remembrance and on the tablet of My heart. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, that thou hast left thy first love. All that so grieves thee in thy service;

the weariness and lassitude ; the vacillation of purpose ; the neglect of humble self-denying duties ; the shrinking from thy daily cross ; the repeated falling into sins which thou hast so often confessed, vanity and self-seeking, waywardness and worldliness, tampering with sceptical doubts and venturing on forbidden speculations, and listening while the tempter asks, as of old, Yea, hath God said ? the cherished thought, My Lord delayeth His coming, because thou art conscious that thou art not ready for Him ;—all these things spring from want of a deeper and stronger love, for it is love which renders Me acceptable service. And any defect of love springs from defect of faith. And any defect of faith springs from interrupted communion with Myself. My child, when last didst thou enjoy a season of delightful fellowship with thy Lord ? I hold tryst with My people as they kneel at the mercy-seat, and as they prayerfully study the pages of the Word of Life. Hast thou not failed to redeem time for prayer and for meditation on My Word ? Hast thou not neglected self-examination ? Hast thou not become more immersed in business, or perhaps so absorbed in My work that thou hast thought less of the Master than of old ? My child, are these things so ? Here is sufficient reason for all thy distress. Return unto Me with all thy heart. I will bind up thy wounds, I will minister to thee the healing medicines of My Word ; and, as thou

art able to bear them, I will revive thee with the rich cordials of My exceeding great and precious promises. I will be unto thee as the dew to a thirsty plant. I will heal thy backslidings. I will love thee freely, for Mine anger is turned away from thee. Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, and have therefore drawn thee to Me so closely in this Holy Supper, and given thee these pledges of My unchanging and unchangeable covenant of grace."

V. *Jesus as the Counsellor.*

At another time it may not be so much the sense of failure in duty which oppresses us, as the burden of perplexity. We are entangled with difficulties, and we know not how to act for the best. The path before us seems hedged up. Ought we to turn to the right hand or to the left? We are beset with temptations on every side. And perhaps we are alone, or at least there is no friend near us into whose ear we can pour our troubles, and on whose judgment we can confidently rely. Our soul is cast down within us, till the cry of the Psalmist rises to our lips, Cause me to hear Thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in Thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto Thee.^a And then we remember that amid that luminous cluster

^a Ps. cxlii. 8.

of names which crown the head of Emmanuel as with a diadem of glory is

COUNSELLOR.^a

It exactly meets our necessity. We fall at His feet and pray, Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God: Thy Spirit is good: lead me. And He speaks to us and says —

“ My child, trust Me, commit thy way to Me, rest in Me. Let thy anxious heart be still. Thou hast cast the burden of thy sin upon Me: cast also upon Me the burden of thy care. I, who am the sin-bearer, am also the burden-bearer of My people. What wouldest thou need in a human friend to whom thou wouldest intrust thy case? Must he not possess fidelity, wisdom, sympathy, decision? And if beside all these he had a tender and peculiar regard for thee, and had proved it by costly self-sacrifices for thy sake, wouldest thou not rely on his counsel? Have not I all these? Is My Name the Truth? Are not all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Me? Have I ever broken the bruised reed, or quenched the smoking flax? When I speak to thee, are not My words the utterance of the mind of God? And as to My love for thee, greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Thou wouldest know the path in which I would have thee walk. I have gone before thee,

^a Isa. ix. 6, 7.

and left thee an example to follow in My steps. Ask thyself, What would my Master have done in these circumstances ? This will solve many a doubt. Or if still perplexed, tell me all the difficulties which surround thee. Think nothing too trivial to tell Me. What interests thee interests thy Lord. What troubles thee is a matter of concern to Me. Cast all thy care upon Me, for I care for thee. And then, under the full conviction that My eye is upon thee, My hand ready to help thee, My love overshadowing thee, consider once more thy dubious path. At least the next step, which I would have thee take, shall be revealed to thee. Take it, and another step shall be made clear. Thus walk, if need be step by step, till thou art free of the entangling forest, and I set thy feet in a large room ; and then thou shalt run the way of My commandments. Only be assured that I will lead thee by a right path, till I bring thee to the city of eternal habitations.”

Each perplexity will need the Great Counsellor's special advice, which He will give by His Word and Spirit, and the very fact of having opened our heart to Him will bring a sense of unutterable rest.

VI. Jesus the Brother born for adversity.

Adversity is closely akin to perplexity : but our Communion seasons measure all our pilgrim course ; and perhaps we have come to God's house broken

down with sorrow. Some great calamity has swept away our resources. Some unsuspected disease has sapped our strength. Some unmerited reproach has been cast upon us, and apparently blighted our influence. Some heavy affliction has befallen our kindred or friends. Some sore bereavement has desolated our own home. And we are ready to say with Israel of old, My way is hid from the Lord. But One draws near to us. Majesty and meekness are blended in His mien. There is a gentleness in the tones of His voice which penetrates our very hearts, as He lays His hand upon us and says :—

“ Beloved, I know thy sorrows. That which touches thee touches the apple of Mine eye. For I have trodden Myself the rough path of mortal life. I have passed through the deep waters till I made moan to My Father, saying, All Thy billows and Thy waves have gone over Me. Art thou brought down to poverty? I once was poorer than the poorest, for I had not where to lay My head. Art thou weak and suffering? In the hour of the powers of darkness My strength was dried and My visage marred more than any man's. Art thou unjustly suspected and accused? My enemies laid to My charge things which I knew not, to the great discomfort of My soul. Are thy loved ones in sorrow? Has death entered the innermost enclosure of thy home? I too have been a mourner in the house of affliction, and have wept beside the

grave of My friend. Think it not strange concerning this fiery trial which has overtaken thee, as though some strange thing had happened unto thee. The same afflictions are accomplished in thy brethren which are in the world. Nay, herein thou art filling up that which is behind of My sufferings.^a I did not lead thee to expect a sorrowless journey home. I foretold thee that in the world thou shouldest have tribulation. This has come upon thee. But I also told thee, In Me ye shall have peace. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. I will give thee food and raiment, until thou comest to My Father's house in peace. I will strengthen thee, when flesh and heart are failing. I will bring out thy just dealing as the noonday. I will satiate and comfort every mourner that clings to Me. And I will be with thee and thine in passing through the valley of the shadow of death. For My gifts and calling are without repentance; and having loved thee in time past, and loving thee now, I will love thee unto the end. For is it not written in My Word, A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity?"^b

VII. *Jesus as the Prophet or Teacher of His people.*

Let us conceive ourselves in the quiet intervals

^a Col. i. 24.

^b Prov. xvii. 17.

of our Communion Service as sitting, like Mary, at the feet of Jesus and hearing His words, till our hearts, in measure satisfied but hungering for more, cry out to Him, That which I see not teach thou me;^a and He answers :—

“ My child, I have already revealed to thee something of My Father's love and Mine. But it is quite true there are unsearchable riches beyond. I see the longing of thy soul to know more. Those desires are not blameworthy ; it is I who implanted them in thee. Secret things indeed belong to the Lord thy God.^b I have veiled them for thy profit ; they are for the exercise of thy faith. Nay, if thou couldest see all which now thou cravest to know, there would be, there must be, illimitable regions beyond thy largest intuition. The finite at every point of its circumference touches the infinite. Be assured I have drawn the line between things secret and revealed, where it is for thy highest good. For I am training thee for My service in My kingdom. And does the master take pleasure in one of princely blood, whom he is training for a lofty future ? so do I take pleasure in thee. Still, it is true, there are limitless treasures of love of which now thou knowest very little, and which it would be thy highest wisdom to acquire. Only sit at My feet. Only make time for communion with Me. With the lowly is wisdom. My Father hides things from

^a Job xxxiv. 32.

^b Deut. xxix. 29.

the wise and prudent which He reveals unto babes. I will teach thee from My Word ; its entrance giveth light. It will reveal to thee more of thyself, but only as thou art able to bear it in the light of My love. The light will humble, but the love will heal. And then progressively I will reveal to thee by My Spirit the deep things of God. For the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him ; and He will show them His covenant.^a The servant indeed oftentimes knoweth not what his Lord doeth. Henceforth I call thee not My servant, but My friend ; for all things that I have heard of My Father, as thou art ready to receive them, I will make known to thee.^b I will commune with thee of the mysteries of that love, wherewith My Father loved thee, and I loved thee, before the foundations of the world were laid ; and of that love which stooped to the bitter cross for thee ; and of that love which rejoices to shower on thee the choicest gifts and graces of My Spirit ; and, if thou wilt, I will tell thee of that place in the many mansions of My Father's house which I am preparing for thee. Nor let it distress thee that many an enigma must yet remain which thou canst not unravel on earth ; for the time is short, and the hour is at hand when thou shalt see face to face, and shalt know even as thou art known."

Surely there is an unspeakable rest in such communings to those who cannot hush

^a Ps. xxv. 14.

^b John xv. 15.

“ Those obstinate questionings
 Of sense and outward things,
 Fallings from us, vanishings,
 Blank misgivings of a creature
 Moving about in worlds not realized,
 High instincts before which our mortal nature
 Doth tremble like a guilty thing surprised.
 Those first affections,
 Those shadowy recollections,
 Which, be they what they may,
 Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
 Are yet a master light of all our seeing,
 Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
 Our noisy years seem moments in the being
 Of the eternal silence ; truths that wake
 To perish never.”

It is enough that we can breathe them into the ear of our great and sympathizing Teacher. For Jesus knows all, and we know Jesus.

VIII. *Jesus the Giver of the Holy Ghost.*

At another Communion season we fix our thoughts upon Jesus as the smitten Rock of Ages from whence ever flow the streams of living water for the life and refreshment of the Israel of God.

Perhaps we are pondering His words uttered on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, when they drew water in a golden ewer from the pool of Siloam, and poured it forth before the altar in memory, as they said, of the water which gushed from the stony rock in the wilderness, and in anticipation of the promised effusion of the Holy

Spirit; and when our Master stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." And we remind ourselves that the inspired Evangelist adds, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified."^a And then we follow Him in heart and mind as He ascended from Olivet, and we track by faith His journey through the heavens, till welcomed by the Hosannas of the saints in light He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. We remind ourselves that the Father has given Him the measureless gifts of the Holy Ghost for His Church, and that He in the munificence of His love has poured forth, and is continually pouring forth, those freshening dews and showers of grace upon His people. And now the craving becomes almost irresistible, for all our need is present to us, and all His inexhaustible fulness; and at last our very heart cries out, Lord, give me to drink. Surely, then, the Master speaks to us and says:—

"My child, it was for this very reason I suffered thee to thirst. I have been leading thee through these waste and weary sands to humble thee and to prove thee. How often hast thou set before thyself a lofty standard of love and devotion; and

^a John vii. 37-39.

thou hast in thine own way striven to attain unto it ; and yet again and again thou hast failed, and wept thy failure with tears of disappointment and of shame. Wherefore, My child ? Is it not that thou hast striven in thine own power, relying on thy consciousness of integrity and on thy tenacity of resolve ? Whereas it is only, as thou art strengthened with might by My Spirit in the inner man, that thou canst apprehend My love and attain My likeness and do My pleasure. But be not cast down overmuch at thy past failures and falls. I have all grace in store for thee. Remember how it is written, When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.^a Yes, the God of Israel : put Me now to proof, as My servant Jacob when he wrestled with Me the livelong night, and said to Me at break of day, I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me. Fear not : I am the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. My heart is full of love, My hands of gifts for thee. I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. What is thy request ? Thou longest to gain a daily and hourly victory over that sin which so easily besets thee : only yield to the motions of My Spirit, My almighty ever-present Spirit, and sin shall not have dominion over thee. Thou longest for a deeper knowledge and enjoy-

^a Isa. xli. 17.

ment of the love of God : that love, if thou keepest close to My side, shall be shed abroad in thy heart by the Holy Ghost whom I have given thee. Thou longest for more power in My service : only abide in Me, and be it unto thee even as thou wilt ; thou shalt be clothed with power from on high. Thou longest for a deeper insight into things to come : only continue in My love, walking in the delightful pathway of obedience; and My Spirit will reveal to thee, as thou art able to bear it, the unsearchable riches of My glory. Dear child of My love, I can give thee no more blessed commandment than that I have given thee, Be filled with the Spirit." ^a

IX. Jesus our Advocate with the Father.

At another time it may be we are contemplating Jesus as our Advocate with the Father, who ever liveth to make intercession for us. His words, the words of the Prince of Life when, standing by the grave of death, He lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me ; and I knew that Thou hearest Me always," ^b live before us. Our whole soul is filled with the vision of that all-prevalent Intercessor at the right hand of God. Our needs, and the needs of those we love, and for whom we would pray, are more than we are able to express. But have we prayed with the chastened Hezekiah, "O Lord, I am

^a Eph. v. 18.

^b John xi. 41, 42.

oppressed ; undertake for me"? " And has the holy confidence of Jeremiah taken possession of us, " Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon Thee : Thou saidst, Fear not. O Lord, Thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul"? Ah, now a strange and blessed calm falls upon the troubled waters, and the voice of Jesus is heard by us, saying :—

" My child, I can interpret the unuttered and unutterable longings of thy soul, and I will interpret them and plead them with My Father. Be not afraid. He loves thee even as I love. He, who searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit ; and those yearnings and desires, which cannot find expression in thy words, make Me thy Advocate. I know thy longings for light and love, for purity and peace, for joy and praise. I plead them with My Father, and Me He heareth always. Thy petition is granted ; be it unto thee even as thou wilt, rather than as thou hast prayed ; be it unto thee according to thy heart's desire, rather than according to the request of thy lips. I will satiate thy weary soul with fatness, and satisfy thee with My goodness. But what else is thy petition ? it shall be granted thee. I know that there are those dear to thee as thine own soul, whose wants are laid upon thy heart at this time. Is it father or mother, husband or wife, children or children's children, brother or sister, servant or other inmate of thy home ?

^a Isa. xxxviii. 14. ^b Lam. iii. 57, 58. ^c Jer. xxxi. 14.

Is it some friend, who seems knit to thee even more closely than by ties of blood? Tell Me all that thou desirest for them both here and hereafter. If it be for thy good and theirs, if it be possible in the counsels of eternal love, thy longing on their behalf, suggested by My Spirit and sustained by My intercession, shall have power with God and prevail. But is it that thy heart is embracing a wider circle, the flock of which thou art a member, the pastors who watch over thee, thy Church and country, and those who have gone forth as missionary labourers into far-off lands? Herein thou hast the mind of thy Lord and Master: tell Me all, or at least try and tell Me. I will catch thy feeblest whispers, thy broken utterances. For thyself and for all, ask in My Name, and thou shalt receive, that thy joy may be full.”^a

X. Jesus Christ as our Forerunner.

If only we could contemplate our Lord in the aspects we have already considered—as our Shepherd and Host, as the Lamb of God, as our High Priest, as the Good Physician, as our Counsellor, as the Brother born for adversity, as our Prophet and Teacher, as the Giver of the Holy Ghost, as our Advocate with the Father,—if these were all the revelations of Jesus Christ vouchsafed to us in Scripture, what a perfect Friend, we might well

^a John xvi. 24.

exclaim, is here with whom to hold communion ! But stay : we are strangers and pilgrims here on earth ; our own life is as a shadow that declineth ; and those we love are taken from our clinging grasp. The shadows of mortality are continually cast upon us, who are conscious of immortality. And the human heart asks persistently of that which lies beyond the river. Blessed be God, we have a hope, sure and steadfast, an anchor of the soul which enters into that within the veil (and all that hope centres round a Person), whither the Forerunner has for us entered, even Jesus.

If, then, at some Communion season our heart is pondering those questions, which will sooner or later beset every thoughtful mind, as to things unseen and eternal, how sweet is it to listen to the voice of the Master, saying :—

“ My child, I know that thou art meditating much to-day on the things which lie beyond the narrow limit of thy earthly pilgrimage. Nor do I blame thee. For I made thee in My image, who am the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. I endowed thee with immortality. I formed thee for eternity. I have told thee that thy life on earth is as a vapour, and that thou knowest not what shall be upon the morrow. Yea, I have charged thee to set thy affections on things above. Moreover, not only is the hour of thy own summons home veiled from thee for thy soul's health, that thou mayest be always dependent on Me, and

always ready for My call ; but many of those very dear to thee have already passed within the veil. I know thy longings after them. Think, then, My child, of Me as thy Forerunner. For thy sake I passed through the valley of the shadow of death, when it was wrapped in unexampled gloom. I know, for I have proved it, how the flesh and heart fail when the mortal tabernacle is being taken down. But My Father is thy Father, and My God thy God. Be not afraid. When the time of thy departure is come, no harm shall happen to thee. I will keep thee as the apple of Mine eye ; I will hide thee under the shadow of My wings. The powers of darkness know Me, and I will not suffer any to set on thee to hurt thee. The blessed angels, who carried Lazarus to his rest, ever do My pleasure, hearkening to the voice of My word, and I will give them charge concerning thee. Till the resurrection morning I have prepared the paradise of the holy dead, the outer vestibule of heaven itself, for the reception of My saints. I will meet thee on the other side. Absent from the body, thou shalt be present with thy Lord. Thou shalt be comforted with heavenly consolations for all that thou hast borne and suffered below. Thou shalt enter into rest, My rest, and there await the joyful morning of My return. And dost thou ask Me of thy beloved ones, who now sleep in Me, while thou art battling thy way heavenward ? It is indeed well with them. They are with Me in Paradise,

which is far better. Blessed are they, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow along with them. Dost thou long to know more of their thoughts and occupations? Ah, My child,

‘Till death the weary spirit free
Thy God hath said 'tis good for thee
To walk by faith and not by sight :
Take it on trust a little while,
Soon shalt thou read the mystery right
In the full sunshine of My smile.’

Meanwhile, let it suffice thee that they are with Me, and I am with thee. Here is the indissoluble link of union betwixt thee and them, until ye meet in My Presence. And beyond there is all eternity for the enjoyment of perfected communion, first with thy Lord, and then with thy brethren.”

XI. Jesus as the Bridegroom of His Church.

The thought of Jesus as the Forerunner entering within the veil for us may naturally introduce us to a yet higher, in some aspects the highest, contemplation of our Lord as the Bridegroom. Perhaps we have been humbly and reverently pondering the words of the Church of old, “I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love.”^a And we almost involuntarily say, Oh

^a Song ii. 3, 4.

would that the Beloved of my soul might reveal Himself to me and commune with me, the weakest and unworthiest member of His mystical Bride ! And, even while we are speaking in our heart, He answers us :—

“ I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Thou wast cast out to die ; but I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, and thy time was the time of love. I said to thee, Live. And knowing that another claimed thy life, I laid down My own for thy sake. I called thee. I drew thee to Me with the cords of love. I cleansed thee with My blood. I clothed thee with the garments of salvation. I put My comeliness upon thee, so that thy beauty is the perfect beauty of thy Lord.^a It is enough, I am thy Beloved, and thou art Mine. I know that thy heart is weak and wayward ; I know that too often other things engross thy soul ; I know that thy great enemy and Mine seeks to sow thoughts of distrust in thy bosom ; but having loved thee, My own one, in the world, I will love thee unto the end. And now I am training and educating thee for My royal court and for the everlasting mansions of My Father’s house. The communion, which I hold with thee now, is but the prelude of the fellowship which thou shalt enjoy with Me there. The services, which thou delightest to render Me on earth, are only preparing thee for

^a Ezek. xvi. 1-14.

thy ministries of love before the throne. And when My time is fully come, when I have accomplished the number of My elect, I will present thee with all thy brothers and sisters in the family of God, as a perfect Bride, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish, before the presence of My glory, with exceeding joy. Nothing then shall be wanting to thy eternal felicity. No veil shall then separate betwixt thee and thy Lord. Thou shalt see Me as I am, and be like Me for ever; and I shall look upon thee with a perfect complacency of delight. For there My glory shall rest upon thee, and thou shalt know Me even as thou art known, and thy spirit's satisfaction find utterance in the words of the Song of Songs, My Beloved is mine, and I am His."

XII. *Jesus Christ the King of Glory.*

For personal felicity and for the realization of the communion of saints, nothing can transcend the excellence of contemplating Jesus as Bridegroom. But we are part of the universe of God, and as such the everlasting kingship of our Lord over things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, is necessary to crown our joy. And perhaps, when drawing near to His royal board, or having just retired from it, we remember how it is written of Him, "On His head are many crowns. . . . And He hath on His

vesture and on His thigh a Name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords.^a He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet.^b In His Name every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."^c And as we muse, our hearts, which are so often tossed and torn with the wrongs of time, rest on the certainty of the eternal victory of Divine goodness, and glow with loyalty and love toward our Melchisedec, the King of righteousness, the King of peace. He has brought forth bread and wine, and is feasting us at His table, and He speaks comfortably to us, and says :—

"My child, be of good cheer. Thou art suffering with Me now, thou shalt reign with Me for ever. Thou seest that I am crowned with many crowns. My Father has crowned Me with His favour, and given Me a Name which is above every name. The Holy Spirit has crowned Me with the immeasurable plenitude of His grace for My Church. The angels crown Me with their adoring praise. The saints crown Me with, if possible, their deeper love. The crown of victory is on My brow, for I have led captivity captive. Mine is the crown of immortality, for death hath no more dominion over Me. And Mine is the crown of endless and limitless royalty over the universe of God; for, having overcome every adverse power, I am set down for ever with My Father on His

^a Rev. xix. 12, 16. ^b 1 Cor. xv. 25. ^c Phil. ii. 10, 11.

throne. But, My child, let not the thought of My coronation glory be a barrier separating betwixt thee and thy Lord. Nay, rather let it draw thee closer to Me. Remember how I prayed to My Father on earth, The glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as We are one : I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.^a My child, I do not repent Me of these words. I am Heir of all things, but My people are joint-heirs with Me. I will grant thee, when thy victory is won, to sit with Me on My throne. Thou too shalt be crowned with favour, and grace, and love, and immortality, and royalty. And thou shalt share in all My illimitable designs of goodness in all the provinces of My dominion throughout the ages of eternity."

Who that listens does not answer with David when he went in and sat before the Lord and said, " Who am I, O Lord God, that Thou hast brought me hitherto ? And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, but Thou hast spoken of Thy servant for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God ? And what can I say more unto Thee ? for Thou, O Lord, knowest Thy servant. For Thy word's sake and according to Thine own heart hast Thou done all these great things, to make Thy servant know them."^b

^a John xvii. 22, 23.

^b 2 Sam. vii. 18-21.

"I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him."
—JOHN xiv. 21.

Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face ;
Here faith can touch and handle things unseen ;
Here would I grasp with firmer hand Thy grace,
And all my weariness upon Thee lean.

Here would I feed upon the bread of God ;
Here drink with Thee the royal wine of heaven ;
Here would I lay aside each earthly load,
Here taste afresh the calm of sin forgiven.

I have no help but Thine ; nor do I need
Another arm save Thine to lean upon ;
It is enough, my Lord, enough indeed ;
My strength is in Thy might, Thy might alone.

Mine is the sin, but Thine the righteousness ;
Mine is the guilt, but Thine the cleansing blood :
Here is my robe, my refuge, and my peace—
Thy blood, Thy righteousness, O Lord, my God.

Too soon we rise : the symbols disappear ;
The feast, though not the love, is passed and gone ;
The bread and wine remove ; but Thou art here,
Nearer than ever, still my Shield and Sun.

Feast after feast thus comes and passes by ;
Yet passing, points to the glad feast above ;
Giving sweet foretastes of the festal joy,
The Lamb's great bridal feast of bliss and love.

BONAR.

POST COMMUNION: THE LORD'S PRAYER.

- ¶ When all have communicated, the Minister shall return to the Lord's Table, and reverently place upon it what remaineth of the consecrated Elements, covering the same with a fair linen cloth.
- ¶ Then shall the Priest say the Lord's Prayer, the people repeating after him every Petition.

OUR Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

WE have been admitted as the children of God to gather round our Father's board, and He has communicated to us that which, we may with humble reverence affirm, is dearest to His own heart, even His delight in His own Son, with whom He is always well pleased. And now, ere we leave His house and return to the manifold duties of life, we unite in a few closing prayers. Nor could any words be more helpful than those, which the Lord Himself has taught us to use when drawing nigh to God. Truly this prayer to our Father breathes in every petition the spirit of His Son.

It was this prayer, then uttered by the priest

alone, which struck the keynote at the beginning of our holy service (and for a few thoughts on its several clauses I would refer the reader to its use then); but now it is repeated by the priest and people together, and the devout communicant, who has just partaken of the choicest tokens of a Father's bounty, will make it the expression of filial thankfulness and confidence. We are children at the footstool of our Father's throne, and this prayer will put into words for us the argument of the apostle, He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?^a The bread and wine, which we have received, are pledges that all the treasures of Divine love are freely opened to us now. Through Jesus we have access by One Spirit unto the Father.^b It is enough; we have found rest to our souls.

There is a beautiful passage in Brainerd's diary, where he speaks of the first manifestation to his heart of God in Christ. He says: "As I was walking in a dark thick grove, incomparable glory seemed to open to the view and apprehension of my soul. I do not mean any external brightness, for I saw no such thing; nor do I intend any imagination of a body of light somewhere away in the third heavens, or anything of that nature; but it was a new inward apprehension that I had of God, such as I never had before, nor anything which

^a Rom. viii. 32.

^b Eph. ii. 18.

had the least resemblance of it. I stood still and wondered and admired. I knew that I had never seen before anything comparable to it for excellency and beauty. It was widely different from all the conception, that I ever had had of God or of things Divine. I had no particular apprehension of any One Person in the Trinity, either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost. But it appeared to me Divine glory which I then beheld; and my soul rejoiced with joy unspeakable to see such a God, such a glorious Divine Being; and I was inwardly pleased and satisfied that He should be God over all for ever and ever. My soul was so captivated and delighted with the excellency, loveliness, greatness, and other perfections of God, that I was even swallowed up in Him. . . . At this time the way of salvation opened to me with such infinite wisdom and suitableness, that I wondered I should ever think of any other way, and was amazed that I had not dropped my own contrivances and complied with this lovely, blessed, and excellent way before. If I could have been saved by my own duties, or any other way that I had formerly contrived, my whole soul would now have refused. I wondered that all the world did not see and comply with this way of salvation, entirely by the righteousness of Christ. . . . For several days I could but sweetly rejoice in God.”^a

This was the first lifting up of God's counten-

^a Abridged from the Life of D. Brainerd, pp. 17-19.

ance upon a soul which had long been seeking Him ; but surely it is in a like spirit of holy adoration we are invited to utter the words "Our Father" after drawing so near to Him at His table, and to join now in the triumphant doxology of faith, Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Our very souls respond, Amen and Amen.

" *Ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry,
Abba, Father.*"—ROM. viii. 15.

Uncreated Fount of light,
Glory without shade of night,
Everlasting, infinite,
 Holy Father, hear us.

Well of life that ever flows,
Life more pure than stainless snows,
Life in calm serene repose,
 Holy Father, hear us.

Blessèd One, whose Name is love,
Pleads with Thee Thy Son above ;
Broods o'er us Thy hovering Dove ;
 Holy Father, hear us.

Round about Thy sapphire throne
Shines the rainbow's emerald zone,
Breathing heavenly peace alone :
 Holy Father, hear us.

There before Thy mercy-seat
Saints in light and angels meet ;
Yet behold us at Thy feet :
 Holy Father, hear us.

Thou whose deep compassions yearn
 For the prodigal's return,
 And his far-off steps discern,
 Holy Father, hear us.

Aching hearts that long for rest,
 'Wilder'd souls by doubt oppressed,
 Babes that crave a parent's breast,—
 Holy Father, hear us.

All have some great gift to seek,
 Hungred, thirsty, weary, weak ;
 All have wants no words can speak,
 Holy Father, hear us.

Is not Thy paternal board
 With all royal bounties stored,
 Priceless, countless, unexplored ?
 Holy Father, hear us.

Thou who sparedst not Thy Son,
 Him Thine own, Thine only One,
 Till Thy work by Him was done,
 Holy Father, hear us.

Thou in all His sorrows nigh,
 Thou, who hearest His last cry,
 Thou, who sufferedst Him to die,
 Holy Father, hear us. !

Thou, Omnipotent to save
 From destruction's 'whelming wave,
 Death and hell and vanquished grave,
 Holy Father, hear us.

Thou, at whose right hand once more,
 He is now, His conflict o'er,
 Throned where He was throned before
 Holy Father, hear us.

Thou, who crownest Him with grace,
Foldest Him to Thine embrace,
Him the brightness of Thy face,
 Holy Father, hear us.

All the richest gifts of heaven,
Sevenfold from the Spirits Seven,
Measureless to Him are given :
 Holy Father, hear us.

At His word Thy Spirit came,
Crowns of light and tongues of flame :
Oh for our Redeemer's Name,
 Holy Father, hear us.

Grant us in this holy hour
From His bride's exhaustless dower
Light and life and peace and power :
 Holy Father, hear us.

Hear our cry, our voiceless needs :
Hear, in us Thy Spirit pleads :
Hear, for Jesus intercedes :
 Holy Father, hear us. Amen.
 E. H. B.

THE PRAYER OF SELF-SURRENDER.

¶ After shall be said as followeth.

O LORD and heavenly Father, we Thy humble servants entirely desire Thy fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; most humbly beseeching Thee to grant, that by the merits and death of Thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in His blood, we and all Thy whole Church may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of His Passion. And here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee; humbly beseeching Thee, that all we, who are partakers of this Holy Communion, may be fulfilled with Thy grace and heavenly benediction. And although we be unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto Thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech Thee to accept this our bounden duty and service; not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom, and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory be unto Thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. Amen.

WE have here another utterance of the heart towards God. As humble servants we address Him, who is Lord over all. As children we come to our heavenly Father, and cast ourselves on His fatherly goodness. Oh for more and more of this Spirit of adoption! How much of true religion consists in it! It is the very foretaste of heaven.

We first ask Him to accept the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. The obedience of faith in coming to the Lord's Table is in itself an act of thanksgiving. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" asks the Psalmist, and replies, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord : I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all His people."^a Thus even under the law praise was set over against sacrifice: "Hear, O My people, and I will speak. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt-offerings. Offer unto God thanksgiving. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me."^b And under the new covenant these are expressly named as the spiritual sacrifices which the saints as a royal priesthood are to offer to God, even the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.^c Such praises, accompanied with gifts of love, are sacrifices with which God is well pleased.^d This indeed is Eucharist.

We then pray that by the merits and death of Jesus, and through faith in His blood, we ourselves and the whole Church may obtain remission of our sins and all other benefits of His Passion. It is not as doubting the sufficiency of the pardon, which we have already received, that we thus pray. We have searched our hearts and lives before God ;

^a Ps. cxvi. 12-14.

^c 1 Peter ii. 5, 9.

^b Ps. l. 7, 8, 14, 23.

^d Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

we have confessed all our sins ; we have heard His absolution ; we have built on the strong consolation of the Gospel promises ; we have received the pledges of His loving favour towards us ; and yet we continue to pray for the remission of our sins here and to the very end of the service. Why is this ? Surely it is that we have drawn very nigh to God, and in the presence of His excellent glory we are more deeply conscious than ever of our own countless failures and shortcomings. We are walking in the light as He is in the light, and so the assurance is more precious to us than ever, The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.^a

But what is meant by all the other benefits of His Passion ? The word *passion* draws us to Gethsemane and Calvary ; and surely there we learn, as nowhere else, the sympathy and victorious patience of Jesus. Some of these benefits are expressed for us in the touching hymn :^b—

“ Go to dark Gethsemane,
Ye that feel the tempter's power ;
Your Redeemer's conflict see,
Watch with Him one bitter hour :
Turn not from His griefs away,
Learn of Jesus Christ to pray.

Follow to the judgment-hall,
View the Lord of life arraigned.

^a 1 John i. 7.

^b By James Montgomery.

Oh, the wormwood and the gall !
Oh, the pangs His soul sustained !
Shun not suffering, shame, or loss,
Learn of Him to bear the cross.

Calvary's mournful mountain climb ;
There, adoring at His feet,
Mark that miracle of time,
God's own Sacrifice complete.
" It is finished," hear Him cry : .
Learn of Jesus Christ to die.

Early hasten to the tomb
Where they laid His breathless clay ;
All is solitude and gloom ;
Who hath taken Him away ?
Christ is risen ; He meets our eyes : .
Saviour, teach us so to rise."

Yes, the Passion of Jesus leads us on to that which one has well called, the victory of the Vanquished. When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

And these benefits we supplicate for ourselves and the whole Church. Such an ennobling and expanding ordinance is the Supper of the Lord. As before we prayed for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here on earth, and gave thanks for those whose warfare is accomplished ; as before in the Ter Sanctus we joined with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven in lauding and magnifying the Name of our God ; so here we pray that the whole Church, with ourselves, may obtain all the benefits of the Passion of our

Redeemer. Is it not the voice of the Bride to whom it shall be granted to stand in white robes before the throne?

And now we come to the central act of this prayer, our self-consecration to God. We have offered Him the adoration of our lips: here we offer Him the surrender of our life, all we are and all we have. It is a delightful service, when the infant of a Christian home is solemnly dedicated to God in holy Baptism. It is a most impressive hour, when at Confirmation the baptized, having come to years of discretion, openly and of their own accord ratify their covenant, and the Bishop lays his hand upon the head of each and prays, Defend, O Lord, this Thy child with Thy heavenly grace, that he may continue Thine for ever, and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more, until he come unto Thy everlasting kingdom. But surely no hour can surpass in solemnity this, when, having now partaken of the symbols of our Saviour's body and blood, we say, Here we offer and present unto Thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Thee. Our hearts are subdued within us. One thought, though in different aspects, fills every believer's soul, The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me.^a Is not the response of our innermost bosom, We love Him, and give ourselves to Him?

^a Gal. ii. 20.

“ Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small ;
Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

Just before we have heard the words addressed to us as we knelt at His table, The body of Christ which was given for thee, the blood of Christ which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. It is that body and soul, that mysterious and complex being of ours, so inestimably precious, so eternally safe in Christ, which we here offer and present unto God. No portion is kept back for self; no fraction is laid aside for the world; no foothold is reserved for God’s enemy and ours. We are wholly the Lord’s. We are simply and literally not our own. We are Christ’s.

Is it very humbling to think how often we have thus given ourselves to God, and how often and grievously we have failed? Still if the offer were made us of keeping back part from Christ, should we not answer, “No, a thousand times no; I have been a poor wayward servant, I feel and confess it, to Him; but He has been and is the best of Masters to me. God forbid that I should ever leave His service! only of His infinite mercy may He grant me to be more faithful in days to come”? Is this the language of our hearts? Let us be assured, that notwithstanding all our failures He counts us among His true labourers, and says of

us, Though ye sow in tears, in due season ye shall reap in joy.

And so we proceed to pray that all we who are partakers of this Holy Communion may be fulfilled with His grace and heavenly benediction. Thus, and thus only, is the offering worthy of His acceptance. The vessel was made by Him for His glory; here we pray that it may be filled with His grace. Nor is there anything presumptuous in this prayer. For the Master's own words regarding His disciples are, These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full;^a the apostle's prayer for the Christians at Rome is, The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost;^b and his prayer for the saints at Ephesus, That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.^c Our Father grudges us no beatitude. May ours only be the grateful song of praise, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.^d

But now see the persistent self-humiliation of the forgiven but contrite child of God. We

^a John xv. 11.
^c Eph. iii. 19.

^b Rom. xv. 13.
^d Eph. i. 3, 4.

continue at the footstool of the throne of grace, pleading. Although we be unworthy through our manifold sins to offer unto Thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech Thee to accept this our bounden duty and service, not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences. The guest at the Master's table does not for a moment hide from himself that he is a pardoned sinner. But here is his rest : God's love is deeper than his sins. It was grace which invited him to this feast, grace which welcomed him, grace which gave him to eat of the bread of life and drink of the wine of heaven, grace which has put these songs of joy into his lips, grace which has set before him the open gate of glory. Is it not his bounden duty and service to offer the sacrifice of love and labour? And will not our Father's fatherly heart accept it, not weighing our merits, which in themselves are demerits, but pardoning our offences, however many and however deep they are, through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom and with whom in the Unity of the Holy Ghost we ascribe all glory and honour to Him whom we love to address as Father Almighty? So we climb to praise once more, and are part of that temple of Hallelujah which God inhabits ; nor shall our voice be mute throughout all the ages of eternity, world without end.

THE PASSION OF JESUS.^a

I. THE GARDEN.

Wrestling in agony,
Wrestling alone;
Weary for human love,
Finding none.

While over Olivet
Sleeps the moonlight,
Whose is that broken prayer
Troubling night?

What are those drops of blood
Falling like rain,
Wrung from that heart of Thine,
Man of pain?

Anguish unspeakable
Writ on Thy brow,—
Suppliant Sufferer,
Who art Thou?

II. THE WAY OF SORROWS.

Hark, in thy bosom's depths
Speaks He to thee,
“ Child of My dying love,
Follow Me.

Shall I not drink the cup
My Father gave?—
Drink it, when drinking it
Thee will save?

These words were written by the author after “The Story of the Cross,” by the late E. Monro, and are set to music by the Rev. T. C. Lewis. S. Low & Co.

Buffeted, spitted on,
Loaded with scorns,
Smitten, scourged, purple-robed,
Crowned with thorns :

Onward to Golgotha ;
There I must die ;
All for the love of thee :
It is I."

III. THE SEVEN WORDS UPON THE CROSS.

Nailed to the bitter wood ;
Never a groan :
Bearing our guilt and sin,
Not His own.

Sun of my soul, canst Thou
Suffer eclipse ?
What words are those from Thy
Quivering lips ?

" Father, forgive them," the
Crucified prays :
And Him the Father hears,
Hears always.

Listen, the dying thief
For mercy sighs :—
Calmly He promises
Paradise.

Some from His piercèd feet
Cannot depart—
Listen, He speaks and knits
Heart to heart.

Darkness wraps earth and sky :
Night at mid-day :

Moments like centuries
Pass away.

Hark, through the gloom is heard
One dreadful cry,
“ Thou hast forsaken Me,
Father, why ? ”

Oh, that abandonment !
Oh, death accursed !
What means that plaint of woe,
That “ I thirst ” ?

Hark, “ It is finished.” Thy
Warfare is done ;
Death and hell grappled with ;
Victory won.

“ Father, I breathe to Thee
That Thou hast given.”
Now is there peace betwixt
Earth and heaven.

IV. THE APPEAL.

“ Child of My agonies,
Bought with My blood,
Ransomed from Satan’s thrall,
Saved for God ;

Come to Me, weary one,
Come to My breast :
Here in My bleeding wounds
Hide and rest.

Come to My Father’s feet,
Come without fear :—
I am thy Advocate,
Always near.

Drink of the Spirit's grace,
All things are thine :
I am thy heritage,
Thou art Mine."

V. THE RESPONSE.

Yea, Lord, I give myself
Wholly to Thee :
Only Thy priceless love
Give Thou me.

All I have, all I am,
Body and soul,
Nothing refuse I Thee ;
Take the whole.

Only abide with me,
Lord, to the end ;
Jesus, Emmanuel,
Saviour, Friend.

And when Thy time is come,
Let me adore
Thee in Thy home of light
Evermore.

E. H. B.

THE PRAYER OF FELLOWSHIP.

Or this.

ALMIGHTY and ever-living God, we most heartily thank Thee, for that Thou dost vouchsafe to feed us, who have duly received these holy mysteries, with the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of Thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ ; and dost assure us thereby of Thy favour and goodness towards us ; and that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of Thy Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people ; and are also heirs through hope of Thy everlasting kingdom, by the merits of the most precious death and passion of Thy dear Son. And we most humbly beseech Thee, O heavenly Father, so to assist us with Thy grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as Thou hast prepared for us to walk in ; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with Thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

WE begin this alternative prayer with thanksgiving for the love which has vouchsafed us these sacramental tokens and pledges of redeeming grace. We first cast ourselves upon the Omnipotent God, the wellspring of all life, and then from the very ground of our heart we bless Him for the holy mysteries of that feast, which we have now received.

Unfathomable indeed are the mysteries of heavenly love, which these simple elements of bread

and wine shadowforth. That God should so love the world that He should give His only Son for man ; that the Eternal Word should be made flesh and dwell among us, and die the Sinless for sinners ; that we by the enabling grace of the Holy Spirit should feed in our hearts by faith upon the Incarnate Son of God ;—all these are holy mysteries over which the angels bend in lowly adoration, like the cherubim over the mercy-seat, desiring to look into them, but which eternity will not exhaust. And most tender is the grace, which provides in these simple and yet significant elements of bread and wine such lively pictures of heavenly realities, and which condescends to use them for the nourishment and refreshment of our souls. Who that ponders these things does not echo the words, We most heartily thank Thee? When we think what these Communion seasons have been to us ; how often we were flagging in the heavenly way ; how often our faith had waxed feeble, and our love cold, and our hope dim ; how often some estrangement had sprung up betwixt us and our brethren ; how often we had lost the sense of the nearness of our Master's return : and then how we have come to our Communion feast ; and it has been to us like the manna in the wilderness, or the water gushing from the smitten rock, or the honey of which Jonathan partook in the day of battle, or the food prepared by angelic ministry of which Elijah ate and went in the strength thereof many

days ;—when we think of these things, no wonder that we heartily thank our God, who vouchsafes thus to feed us with the spiritual food of the body and blood of His Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, and assures us thereby of His favour and goodness towards us. If we only realize what these love-tokens tell, where can we stop short of joy and peace in believing ?

For these are pledges that we are very members incorporate in the mystical body of the Son of God. It is a wonderful union shadowed forth when we read of our being living stones built upon the one foundation. It is a yet closer, because an organic, union which is typified, when we are likened to branches abiding in the vine. But the union of members in the human body one with another and with the head, a sensitive intelligent spiritual union, is the closest of all. And that this is the chosen type setting forth the union of Christ and His people, let the testimony of one epistle suffice to prove. St. Paul writing to the Ephesians says, that Christ is the Head over all things to His Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all ; that the Gentiles are of the same body in the Gospel ; that there is one body and One Spirit ; that from Christ the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body

unto the edifying of itself in love ; and lastly, speaking of the union of husband and wife, the apostle says, No man ever yet hated his own flesh ; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church : for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.^a Now, as we partake of one loaf, and drink of one cup, we have a lively image of that spiritual life which One Christ sustains.

The mystical body of Christ is the blessed company of all faithful people. So wonderfully the two truths of our union with our Lord and with His people act and react on each other. Blessed, thrice blessed, is the assurance, that our union with Christ is as real and close as that of a living member with the living Head : only realize this, and we feel how by a spontaneous necessity He loves and cherishes us. And only second to this in felicity is the assurance, that our union with one another is as real and close as the union of one member with another in the same body. It is on this fact that the apostle's closely-argued reasoning with the Corinthians is based, which he concludes by urging "that there should be no schism in the body ; but that the members should have the same care one for another : and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it : now ye are the body of Christ,

^a Eph. i. 22, 23 ; iii. 6 ; iv. 6, 16 ; v. 29, 30.

and members in particular.”^a We may be among the humblest and meanest members in that mystical body; but, thank God, we are assured that those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are “necessary.” The least and lowliest, as well as the highest and most honourable, is needful to the completeness of the Bride of Christ.

“The blessed company of all faithful people”—as these words fall upon our ears, perhaps we first think of all the true and noble-hearted saints who are serving our Lord on earth; it is only here one and there another whom we know; but all are bound to us inseparably; all are ours. Then we think of those who have passed within the veil, fellow-travellers with us once on earth, parents or children, husband or wife, brothers and sisters, kindred and friends, now with Christ, which is far better; all are ours. And then our eye ranges backward through the ages; and there rise before us those who have been faithful witnesses for our Lord in every land, the standard-bearers of His army, the patient labourers whom the world has not known, and of whom the world was not worthy, the students of the Word, the singers and psalmists of the Church in every age, the generous youths, the lovely maidens, the innocent children whom earth has yielded to heaven before they have known the stress of conflict. We think of

^a 1 Cor. xii. 4-27.



the missionaries, and reformers, and confessors, and martyrs, and fathers of the Church, till we embrace in our rapid retrospect the apostles and prophets of the earliest Christian era, and those whom the Spirit moved to write the sacred oracles of the New Covenant. And then beyond these we gaze through the mist of more than two thousand years upon the Old Testament saints, the goodly fellowship of the elder prophets, and priests, and kings, and warriors, till we come in thought to Moses and the pilgrim fathers, and hoary saints like Enoch before the flood. All, all are ours. Moreover, we remember that these are but representatives of that blessed company which no man can number, that holy society where each adds to the joy of all, as every string on a harp multiplies its powers of harmony, and as every gem in a coronet flashes light upon every other gem. And we are very members incorporate in this mystical body: none of them will despise us, none will esteem us in the way, for we are and shall be necessary to them, even as they are to us. Shall not our hearts overflow with praise?

One thought more carries us beyond the present communion of saints: we bless God that we are heirs through hope of His everlasting kingdom by the merits of the death and passion of His dear Son. We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; and as accepted guests at the table of our Lord we read with a new emphasis of interest and

with a new propriety of joy, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us, and the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.^a And looking up to our Father we adoringly confess that all that glory is for us a purchased possession "through the merits of the death and passion of Thy dear Son." *Thy dear Son*: it is very rarely that our Prayer Book (as it is rare in Holy Scripture) uses epithets of such tender endearment respecting the Son of God; but is there not a cause? for how the cost, at which alone they could be ours, enhances the illimitable gifts: love, grateful love, binds them to our heart.

We proceed to pray that we may continue in that holy fellowship. With what humble assurance of faith and hope we may plead for this when the Chief Shepherd has promised, My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand;^b and when His apostle writes, Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.^c But this our final salvation will be fulfilled not without, but with our prayerful and strenuous labours, labours prompted and sustained by the Holy Spirit dwelling in us; for God, who works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure, bids us work out our own salvation

^a Rom. viii. 17-19. ^b John x. 28-30. ^c Phil. i. 6.



with fear and trembling.^a As Hooker so admirably expounds the words of our Lord to St. Peter, I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not:^b "No man's condition so safe as ours: the prayer of Christ is more than sufficient both to strengthen us be we never so weak, and to overthrow all adversary power be it never so strong and potent. His prayer must not exclude our labour. . . . The husbandman must not therefore burn his plough, nor the merchant forsake his trade, because God hath said, I will not forsake thee. . . . It was not the meaning of our Lord and Saviour in saying, 'Father, keep them in Thy Name,' that we should be careless to keep ourselves. To our own safety our own sedulity is required. And then blessed for ever and ever be that mother's child, whose faith hath made him the child of God. The earth may shake, the pillars of the world may tremble under us, the countenance of the heaven may be appalled, the sun may lose his light, the moon her beauty, the stars their glory; but concerning the man that trusteth in God, . . . what is there in the world that shall change his heart, overthrow his faith, alter his affection toward God, or the affection of God to him? If I be of this note, who shall make a separation betwixt me and my God? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?^c No: I am persuaded that neither tribulation, nor

^a Phil. ii. 12, 13.

^b Luke xxii. 32.

anguish, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword, nor death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall ever prevail so far over me.^a I know whom I have believed; I am not ignorant whose precious blood has been shed for me; I have a Shepherd full of kindness, full of care, and full of power: unto Him I commit myself: His own finger hath engraven this sentence in the tables of my heart, ‘Satan hath desired to winnow thee as wheat, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not;’ therefore the assurance of my hope I will labour to keep as a jewel unto the end; and by labour, through the gracious mediation of His prayer, I shall keep it.”^b

From this abiding in the holy fellowship of Christ and of His saints will flow those good works which our God has prepared for us to walk in. And that we may do these works is our closing petition before we ascribe all the glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit everlasting. The petition is founded on the apostle’s words, “For we are His workmanship [*ποίημα*, poem], created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”^c Every believer is a poem or creation, and God is the

^a Rom. viii. 35-39.

^b Hooker, On the Certainty and Perpetuity of Faith in the Elect, vol. ii. 598, 599.

^c Eph. ii. 10.

Author or Maker of that poem. The human author of any really good and great work stamps upon it the impress of his own mind; he endeavours to write up to some lofty ideal which he has conceived; and he himself more or less lives in His work. Now we are God's workmanship. He, the living God, the God of the spirits of all flesh, acts on living loving agents, whom He has designed to reflect His likeness and similitude. This people, He says, have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.^a Does an author live on in the books which he has written? Do Homer and Virgil still fascinate the world? Does Plato still mould the mind of the thoughtful? Are Dante, and Milton, and Shakespeare, and Bunyan the heritage of all after years? Is Bacon the leader still of material progress? Is Butler still the master of argument? Or, rising far higher, are the inspired writers poems of God? Let us be assured that each one of us in our low estate is His poem likewise. Only let His Spirit write His mind upon us: only let us be changed into the image of His Christ; and ere long He that shall come will come to be admired in His saints, and among the rest in us, though the least and lowest of the blessed company of all His faithful people.

^a Isa. xliii. 21.

"As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come."—I COR. xi. 26.

Till He come—Oh let the words
 Linger on the trembling chords ;
 Let the little while between
 In their golden light be seen ;
 Let us think how heaven and home
 Lie beyond that “Till He come.”

When the weary ones we love
 Enter on their rest above,
 Seems the earth so poor and vast,
 All our life-joy overcast ?
 Hush, be every murmur dumb :
 It is only till He come.

Clouds and conflicts round us press :
 Would we have one sorrow less ?
 All the sharpness of the cross,
 All that tells the world is loss,
 Death, and darkness, and the tomb,
 Only whisper “Till He come.”

See, the feast of love is spread,
 Drink the wine, and break the bread :
 Sweet memorials,—till the Lord
 Call us round His heavenly board ;
 Some from earth, from glory some,
 Severed only till He come.

E. H. B.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS.

¶ Then shall be said or sung.

GLORY be to God on high, and in earth peace, good will towards men. We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee, we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King, God the Father Almighty.

O Lord, the only-begotten Son Jesu Christ ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us. Thou that takest away the sins of the world, receive our prayer. Thou that sittest at the right hand of God the Father, have mercy upon us.

For Thou only art holy ; Thou only art the Lord ; Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father. *Amen.*

THIS Eucharistic hymn has been sung by the Church of Christ in her Holy Communion Service certainly from the third or fourth century, and probably earlier. Some believe that it has come down to us from the days of the apostles. In the Eastern Church it goes by the name of "The Angelical Hymn ;" and doubtless no words could strike the keynote of this utterance of the Church's heart, this pouring forth of her adoration mingled with tender pleas for mercy, so well as the song of the

angels at Bethlehem, Glory to God in the highest, and in earth peace, good will towards men.”

We never weary of this song. The music of it haunts us from the days of our childhood : it intensifies the joy of youth : it strengthens the faith of manhood and womanhood : it sheds a glow over the silver frost of age. And the more we ponder it the more unfathomable it is found to be. Does it not seem as if the singers of this hymn had but now come from standing before the throne of

^a With regard to the text of this angelic song Dr. Scrivener writes: “If there be one case more than another in the criticism of the New Testament wherein solid reason and pure taste revolt against the iron yoke of ancient authorities, it is that of the angelic hymn sung at the Nativity. In the common text all is transparently clear—

“ Glory to God in the highest ;
And in earth peace :
Good will towards men.”

The blessed words are distributed after the Hebrew fashion into a stanza of three members. In the first and second heaven and earth are contrasted ; the third refers to both these preceding, and alleges the sufficient cause which has brought God glory and earth peace. By the addition of a single letter to the end of the last line, by reading *εὐδοκίας* for *εὐδοκίᾳ*, the rhythmical arrangement is utterly marred, and the simple shepherds are sent away with a message, the diction of which no scholar has yet construed to his own mind” (Criticism of New Testament, p. 513). Let, then, every shadow of suspicion pass from our mind, and let us rejoice that, instead of the uncouth translation offered us in the *Revised Version*, we have in our authorized Bibles and in our Prayer Book the words which were undoubtedly sung by the angels over the fields of Bethlehem.

glory in the heaven of heavens, and there beholding the face of God? For we instinctively view things in relation to that of which our hearts are full. Their hearts were filled with the fulness of God.

And yet we ask ourselves again and again, What called forth this adoration of the angels? Their song was the chorus to the message of another of their holy brotherhood to the shepherds, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord: and this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Was there not much here rather to chasten and perplex? What, the Incarnate Creator of all worlds, self-humbled as a helpless Babe in His mother's arms! That they should express wonder, awe, or gratitude on man's behalf would have seemed natural. But that their first thought should be "Glory to God," what an inlet it is to an angel's heart! How truly Martin Luther says, "The good angels are wiser and know more than the evil angels: for this reason, they have a mirror wherein they look and learn, the face of the Father."

How much these blessed angels knew of the Saviour's after ministry, and death, and resurrection is veiled from us; probably much from the lamp of prophecy. But this must have been transparent to them; they were heralding an act of unexampled self-humiliation, which pledged the Son of God to

redeem the children of men. This was the uttermost of Divine love. And they could trust God with an illimitable trust. To look up into His face would be to read His infinite delight that the Son of His love, in whom He is always well pleased, should thus stoop from the throne of the heavenlies to do His will and destroy the works of the devil, and give Himself for His chosen bride, and open the gates of bliss to all believers. They would behold with a new meaning the great white throne spanned with the emerald arch of mercy. And hence instinctively they sang, Glory to God in the highest, and in earth peace, good will towards men.

Surely it was a true instinct which led the Church militant here in earth, from the earliest ages of her warfare, to begin her hymn of Eucharistic praise with this angelic song. For in the Supper of His love Jesus reveals Himself to His own, as not unto the world : He draws very nigh unto them : He comes in and sups with them, and they sup with Him : He shows them plainly of the Father : He gives them largely of His Spirit : they are in His banqueting-house, and His banner over them is love. It is the nearest approach on earth to the unutterable felicity of being presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. They have here a foretaste of heaven. The angels' joy is theirs. There is no dark spot in their heart unprobed, no cloud of unforgiven sin betwixt them and their God. They are moving in a world

of love. They are conscious of great impulses of gratitude towards God and of tender sympathy towards mankind. And so without any painful effort, yea, almost by a blessed necessity, their souls respond, Glory to God in the highest, and in earth peace, good will towards men.

After the keynote is thus struck, there are five utterances of grateful adoration : (1) We praise Thee ; (2) we bless Thee ; (3) we worship Thee ; (4) we glorify Thee ; (5) we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory. *We praise Thee*, whose pure and perfect goodness satisfies that nature in which man was created after the likeness of God, and in which Thy Holy Spirit is now re-creating us. *We bless Thee*, pouring forth our hearts in thanksgiving, the irrepressible voice of our joy in Thee. *We worship Thee*, for our souls are wholly prostrate and subdued within us, and we crave even the lowest place in Thy courts, where we may offer Thee the homage of our hearts and give Thee all we are and all we have. *We glorify Thee*, ascribing to Thee all the glory who hast saved us with so great a salvation, a salvation which reveals all Thy perfectly harmonious righteousness and grace. *We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory*, not for Thy gifts only, manifold and bountiful as they are, mercies innumerable as the moments which fleet over us, deep as the depth of misery from which Thou hast rescued us, high as the heights of bliss to which

Thou art raising us, and lasting as the eternity in which Thou dwellest ;—but for Thyself, Thine own infinite glory; that Thou art Light, and that in Thee is no darkness at all; that Thou art the Fountain of Life, eternal life; that Thou art love, so that they who dwell in love dwell in Thee. We rest in Thyself. The Eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. We sun ourselves in the calm sunshine of Thy smile. We abide under the shadow of the Almighty. We want no more. Our beings, made for Thee, have found their home in Thee.

What is this but the child for whom the parent has prepared the richest and costliest gifts, turning gladly from them all to enjoy the parent's love, to nestle in the father's arms or to cling to the mother's bosom, saying, "My parent's love is all the world to me"? Surely it is in this spirit we look up and say, We give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory, *O Lord God, i.e. Jehovah, the Self-Existent One, the Eternal I AM, the Mighty God over all; Heavenly King, at the footstool of whose throne we are kneeling; God, the Father Almighty, the Father of Jesus, and therefore our Father, for His Spirit is in us crying in the deeps of our heart, Abba, Father.*

But the hymn of Eucharist continues, and is now addressed to the Eternal Son, *O Lord, the only-begotten Son Jesu Christ; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father.* So the full-orbed glory

of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the effulgence of the Father's glory and the express image of His substance, shines in our hearts and is confessed by our lips. For in this act of adoration we acknowledge, with St. Paul, that to us there is but One Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him ;^a we affirm the confession of St. Peter, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God ;^b we answer with St. Thomas, My Lord and my God ;^c we behold by faith, with St. John, a Lamb as it had been slain, standing in the midst of the throne ;^d we worship the coequal, coeternal, co-essential Son of the Father.^e

We are kneeling at the feet of the Incarnate Word, who was in the beginning with God, and was God, and is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. But the nearer we draw to Him, the Uncreated Light, the more we see the films of darkness and the stains of imperfection in ourselves ; the closer we come to Him who is the altogether Lovely, the more conscious we are of the defects and defilements of our hearts and lives ; the more perfect the harmony of His attributes appears to us, the more sensitive we are to the discords of sin within us and around us. Hence the clinging to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world ; hence the threefold cry, Have mercy upon us ; hence the

^a 1 Cor. viii. 6. ^b Matt. xvi. 16. ^c John xx. 28.

^d Rev. v. 6. ^e John v. 23.

appeal to Him, as our Advocate with the Father, to hear our prayer. Our trust is in the tender mercy of God for ever and ever; it is our peace now; it will be our glory in eternity.

But, ere we close, we return to adoration. We are left in the courts of the house of prayer worshipping and adoring. We cannot but tell the One whom our soul loveth what we know He is in Himself, *Thou only art holy*; what we feel He is to us, *Thou only art the Lord*; and what we humbly acknowledge Him to be in the majesty of the Triune Godhead, *Thou only, O Christ, with the Holy Ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father*. Our *Amen* mingles with the voices of saints and angels before the throne. It only remains for us to hear the benediction of peace.

It is true we speak like children of things we can only very dimly understand. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. We are children here; but ere long we shall put away childish things. Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now we know in part, but then shall we know, even as also we are known.^a

It is said of the aged Polycarp that some of the last words which fell from his lips ere they were sealed by martyrdom were, "For this and for all things I praise Thee, I bless Thee, I glorify Thee," probably a strain from this very anthem. And

^a 1 Cor. xiii. 11, 12.

surely we are never more in unison with the worship of heaven than when our souls and all that is within us respond to this "Angelical Hymn." May the music of it not only elevate our hearts in the solemn hour of our Holy Communion feast, but vibrate through our lives ; so that, whenever the Master calls us to worship within the veil which hides things unseen and eternal, there may be no sudden recoil and revulsion, but we may pass from the praises of earth to the songs of glory with peaceful and calm delight.

"The Lord is my Shepherd. I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."—Ps. xxiii. 1, 6.

The King of love my Shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never ;
I nothing lack if I am His
And He is mine for ever.

Where streams of living water flow
My ransomed soul He leadeth,
And, where the verdant pastures grow,
With food celestial feedeth.

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love He sought me,
And on His shoulder gently laid,
And home, rejoicing, brought me.

In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With Thee, dear Lord, beside me ;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy cross before to guide me.

R

Thou spread'st a table in my sight ;
Thy unction grace bestoweth ;
And oh, what transport of delight
From Thy pure chalice floweth !

And so through all the length of days
Thy goodness faileth never :
Good Shepherd, may I sing Thy praise
Within Thy house for ever.

BAKER.

THE BENEDICTION OF PEACE.

¶ Then the Priest (or Bishop if he be present) shall let them depart with this blessing.

THE peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord : and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you always. *Amen.*

IN the preceding Angelical Hymn the soul is raised to the highest adoration and worship ; and perhaps not seldom, when joining in it, we are inclined to say with St. Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration, Lord, it is good for us to be here : let us tabernacle here. But the work of life will soon call us to descend to the vale of practical duty. We too, like the apostles, must come down from the mount. Only, like them, let us come in close and holy communing with our Lord.

We shall come down, it is useless to hide it from ourselves, to warfare as well as to work. Who has not felt the peril, after a blessed Communion season, of becoming worldly with the world, of being disturbed by its strifes or drawn aside by its ambitions, of being allured to self-indulgence or assaulted by the fiery darts of the

foe? We want a holy peace which no chances or changes of this mortal life can take from us; a peace which shall be a rampart round about the innermost springs of our being, and which shall fulfil to us and in us the promise, Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.^a It is this benediction of peace which the ambassador of Christ pronounces in the Master's Name.

The first part of the benediction is founded on the apostle's words, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."^b And surely, if ever we have poured out our hearts before God, it has been in this holy service; we may therefore humbly expect the fulfilment of this promise in a Divine serenity of soul.

The peace of God here pronounced over us, and which, if received by faith, will distil as the dew of heaven upon our spirit, is the peace of forgiveness for all that is past, the peace of acceptance with God now, the peace of the assurance of His presence with us in all that lies betwixt us and our home. It is the peace of forgiveness; for Jesus Himself has spoken to us, as to her who washed His feet with her tears, Thy sins, which

^a Isa. xxvi. 3.

^b Phil. iv, 6, 7.

are many, are forgiven ; go in peace.^a It is the peace of acceptance ; for the Holy Spirit engraves the word upon our souls, He hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of His grace.^b It is the peace of God's assured presence in all that lies before us ; for have we not been admitted nearer to God even than Moses in the cleft of the rock, and may we not clasp the promise which was made to him to our own bosom, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest ?^c

This peace passes understanding. The world is at a loss to know what the secret strength is on which the believer rests ; and even the child of God himself is often amazed at the holy calm which is shed over him at the footstool of the throne of grace. It is the peace of the God of peace,^d who ever abides in the unperplexed and unclouded calm of eternal love. It is the inheritance and the bequest of Jesus, who says, Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.^e And this peace is shed abroad in the heart by the Comforter who abides in us, according to the apostle's prayer, Now the God of hope fill you

^a Luke vii. 47, 50. ^b Eph. i. 6, 7. ^c Exod. xxxiii. 14.

^d Rom. xvi. 20.

^e John xiv. 27.

with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.^a Can we wonder that this peace passes understanding, when we are thus moving in the sphere of things heavenly and Divine? The benediction besought for us is that our hearts and minds, our whole spiritual and intellectual being, may be kept in the knowledge and love of God and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Knowledge and love act and react on each other. To know God is to love Him; and to love Him is to long to know Him more. And this is the gift of eternal life which Jesus gives to His given ones,^b the first-fruits on earth of the beatific fruition of His glorious Godhead hereafter.

The second part of the benediction, which is a very ancient form, "The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst you and remain with you always," translates into New Testament language the blessing which rested on Israel of old, and imprints it on the heart of every believing communicant. It was said to Aaron and his sons, "On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put My Name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them."^c We can trace in

^a Rom. xv. 13. ^b John xvii. 2, 3. ^c Numb. vi. 23-27.

Holy Writ what that blessing was to the saints in olden time, even as among the last words of benediction which dropped from the lips of Moses we read, “ As thy days, so shall thy strength be. The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. . . . Israel then shall dwell in safety alone : the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine ; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel : who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord ! ”^a Can we put less meaning into the inspired blessing which rests on those who are in Christ Jesus, Peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God ?^b

The fragrant perfume of this benediction is besought for us, that it may be amongst us, who are the brotherhood of Christ, and remain with us always. Not only in our Holy Communion festivals, not only in the courts of prayer, not only in the quiet of our own home ; but in the throng and pressure of daily work, amid the jarring interests of the world, among all the chances and changes of this mortal life we may realize—

“ There are in this loud stunning tide
 Of human care and crime,
 With whom the melodies abide
 Of the everlasting chime ;
 Who carry music in their heart,
 Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,

^a Deut. xxxiii. 25, 27-29.

^b Gal. vi. 16.

Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because thy secret souls a holy strain repeat."

Yes, this peace and this benediction may remain with us always, through all the calms and storms of life, through all its days of golden sunshine and all its shadowing sorrows, for the Master, of whose unchanging love we have now received the tokens and pledges, speaks by them to our heart and says, Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Amen : even so, Lord Jesus.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee : because he trusteth in Thee."—ISA. xxvi. 3.

Peace; perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed?
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.

Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?
On Jesus' bosom nought but calm is found.

Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away?
In Jesus' keeping we are safe and they.

Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown?
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.

Peace, perfect peace, death shadowing us and ours?
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.

It is enough : earth's struggles soon shall cease,
And Jesus call us to heaven's perfect peace.

E. H. B.

¶ Collects to be said after the Offertory, when there is no Communion, every such day one or more; and the same may be said also, as often as occasion shall serve, after the Collects either of Morning or Evening Prayer, Communion, or Litany, by the discretion of the Minister.

ASSIST us mercifully, O Lord, in these our supplications and prayers, and dispose the way of Thy servants towards the attainment of everlasting salvation; that, among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, they may ever be defended by Thy most gracious and ready help; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

O ALMIGHTY Lord, and everlasting God, vouchsafe, we beseech Thee, to direct, sanctify, and govern, both our hearts and bodies, in the ways of Thy laws, and in the works of Thy commandments; that through Thy most mighty protection, both here and ever, we may be preserved in body and soul; through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

GRANT, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that the words, which we have heard this day with our outward ears, may through Thy grace be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruit of good living, to the honour and praise of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

PREVENT us, O Lord, in all our doings with Thy most gracious favour, and further us with Thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in Thee, we may glorify Thy holy Name, and finally by Thy mercy obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

ALMIGHTY God, the Fountain of all wisdom, who knowest our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking; We beseech Thee to have compassion upon our infirmities; and those things, which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask, vouchsafe to give us, for the worthiness of Thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

ALMIGHTY God, who hast promised to hear the petitions of them that ask in Thy Son's Name; We beseech Thee merci-

fully to incline Thine ears to us that have made now our prayers and supplications unto Thee ; and grant, that those things, which we have faithfully asked according to Thy will, may effectually be obtained, to the relief of our necessity, and to the setting forth of Thy glory ; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

¶ Upon the Sundays and other Holy-days (if there be no Communion) shall be said all that is appointed at the Communion, until the end of the general Prayer [For the whole state of Christ's Church militant here in earth] together with one or more of these Collects last before rehearsed, concluding with the Blessing.

¶ And there shall be no celebration of the Lord's Supper, except there be a convenient number to communicate with the Priest, according to his discretion.

¶ And if there be not above twenty persons in the Parish of discretion to receive the Communion ; yet there shall be no Communion, except four (or three at the least) communicate with the Priest.

¶ And in Cathedral and Collegiate Churches, and Colleges, where there are many Priests and Deacons, they shall all receive the Communion with the Priest every Sunday at the least, except they have a reasonable cause to the contrary.

¶ And to take away all occasion of dissension, and superstition, which any person hath or might have concerning the bread and wine, it shall suffice that the bread be such as is usual to be eaten ; but the best and purest wheat bread that conveniently may be gotten.

¶ And if any of the bread and wine remain unconsecrated, the Curate shall have it to his own use : but if any remain of that which was consecrated, it shall not be carried out of the Church, but the Priest and such other of the Communicants as he shall then call unto him, shall, immediately after the Blessing, reverently eat and drink the same.

¶ The bread and wine for the Communion shall be provided by the Curate and the Churchwardens at the charges of the Parish.

¶ And note, that every Parishioner shall communicate at the least three times in the year, of which Easter to be one. And yearly at Easter every Parishioner shall reckon with the Parson, Vicar or Curate, or

his or their Deputy or Deputies ; and pay to them or him all Ecclesiastical Duties, accustomably due, then and at that time to be paid.

¶ After the Divine Service ended, the money given at the Offertory shall be disposed of to such pious and charitable uses as the Minister and Churchwardens shall think fit. Wherein if they disagree, it shall be disposed of as the Ordinary shall appoint.

" WHEREAS it is ordained in this Office for the Administration of the Lord's Supper, that the Communicants should receive the same kneeling ; (which order is well meant, for a signification of our humble and grateful acknowledgment of the benefits of Christ therein given to all worthy Receivers, and for the avoiding of such profanation and disorder in the Holy Communion, as might otherwise ensue;) yet lest the same kneeling should by any persons, either out of ignorance and infirmity, or out of malice and obstinacy, be misconstrued and depraved ; It is hereby declared, That thereby no adoration is intended, or ought to be done, either unto the sacramental bread or wine there bodily received, or unto any Corporal Presence of Christ's natural flesh and blood. For the sacramental bread and wine remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored ; (for that were idolatry, to be abhorred of all faithful Christians;) and the natural body and blood of our Saviour Christ are in heaven, and not here ; it being against the truth of Christ's natural body to be at one time in more places than one."

WORKS BY

THE REV. E. H. BICKERSTETH, M.A.,
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